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" The Dutton Family," by Zoffany (1733-1810).
Painted *circ.* 1760.

The engraved ornament is from a design in Chippendale's " Director."

OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE

FOR THE SMALL COLLECTOR

Its Types, History and Surroundings from MEDIÆVAL to VICTORIAN times

By

J. P. BLAKE

and

A. E. REVEIRS-HOPKINS

Joint Authors of "Little Books about Old Furniture"

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INTRODUCTION

THE object of the present book is to meet the needs of those who require a survey of English Furniture in one inexpensive volume. A chapter on Early Victorian Furniture is added. Sir Thomas Beecham, having rediscovered the music of our Victorian ancestors and found it to the modern liking, it is possible that some Victorian furniture may also respond to modern standards of taste. At all events, like every historical event, it is worth looking into.

History concerns itself with the lives and habits of the people and the furniture with which they surrounded themselves is of significance. The change, for example, from the staid and dour furniture of the Cromwellian time to the gay and lively forms of the restored Charles, are as clear an indication of the change in public opinion as can be found in any documents. No apology is necessary therefore for the mild incursions into history which the writers have permitted themselves. In this connection, free use has been made of contemporary pictures of interiors, which have been somewhat neglected in books on furniture. It is suggested that whatever modern opinion may say on the subject of the furniture used by our ancestors, the chronicles of the artists of the times are historical evidence of the first importance. "An old house," writes Lord Curzon in his literary testament, "has a much longer existence than an individual." "It may," he adds, "be both beautiful and romantic which an individual seldom is." What is true of old houses is at least as true of old furniture, which is more sensitive to changes of fashion and more intimate in its relation to social life.

The drawing reproduced from "Punch" (Fig. 1) suggests that what is ugliness in one age is beauty in the next. Nevertheless we like to think that the law of evolution extends even to taste, and there is, after all, an essential ugliness in the ugly, although we may be too occupied to notice it. Fig. 2, also from "Punch," points the useful moral that the number of genuine

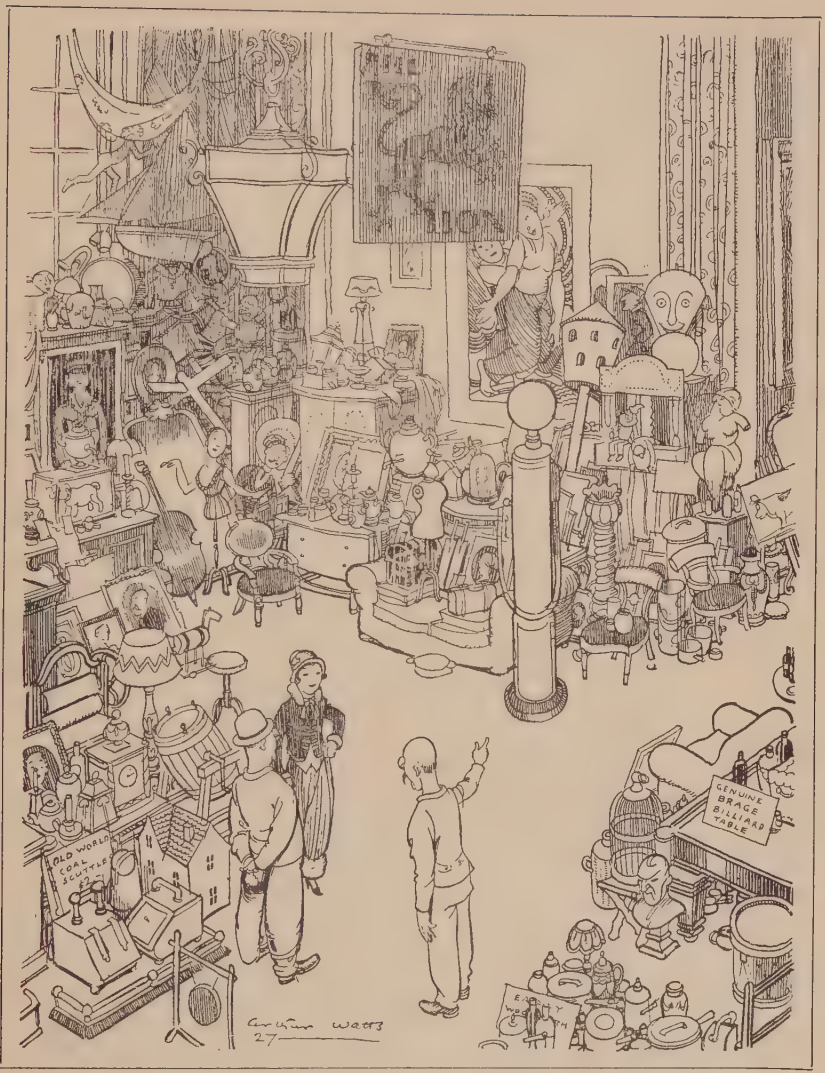

Fig. 1. An Antique Shop in A.D. 2050. (From *Punch*.)

antiques must have had some relation to the contemporary population.

At every season of the year many people resort to the sport of antique hunting and return home laden with the treasures of the chase. Although somewhat expensive, the sport has this advantage—that it can be enjoyed in every corner of England. The smallest village has at least one shop for the sale of antiques, and at many turns of the road we come upon old manor houses, malt houses and farm houses filled with "genuine antiques," until one wonders (as the "Punch" drawing suggests) where the people lived who made use of such quantities of furniture. Chippendale we know employed only about 22 workmen (which fact is verified by contemporary reports of a fire at his workshop), and even making every allowance for the fashion which he influenced, there remains a very large surplus unaccounted for.

Antiques may be divided into three classes :—

1. *Genuine antiques*, being pieces of furniture in approximately the condition in which they were made, making suitable allowance for the ravages of time.

2. *Restored antiques*, being pieces which are, in the main, old but which have been more or less intelligently restored.

3. *Fakes*, being pieces which have been deliberately constructed to deceive. They fall into the same category as the counterfeit half-crown.

In respect to the first class—*genuine antiques*—there are, fortunately, a very large number of pieces of furniture in existence which fall into this category. In other days furniture was more expensive and less common than now—it has therefore been better looked after ; it was better made, the wood was of finer quality—it was made to last. Again, the great house had numberless rooms, and as is shewn in the inventories of the periods their furnishing was a tremendous affair. Further, antiques, by reasons of death and hard times, are frequently changing hands.

Furniture in the second class—*restored antiques*—is a desirable purchase in so far as the original is not overwhelmed by the restoration. An old chair with a new leg may be fairly called a "restored antique," but an old leg to which the remainder of the chair has been added, does not answer to this definition. By a careful distribution of parts one chair may be made into two or more. The restored antique is a matter of degree, and the

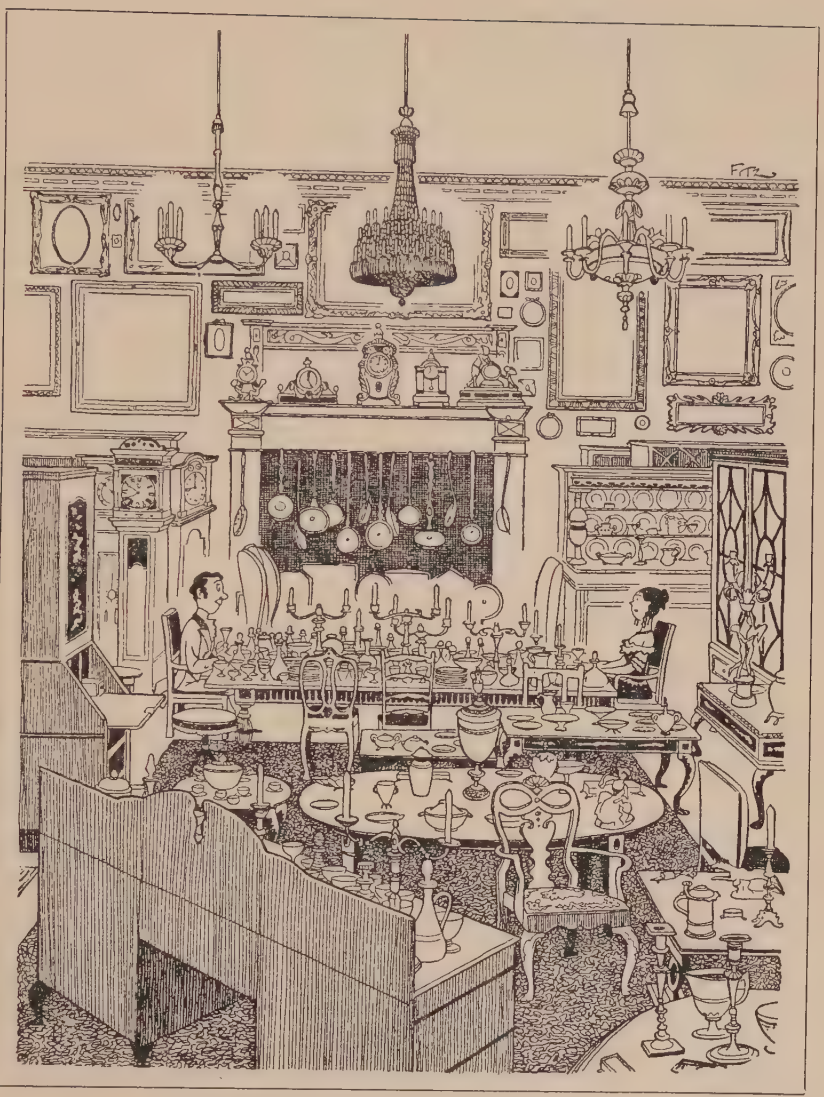

Fig. 2. "From the amount of 'genuine' antiques that one sees for sale nowadays we can only presume that our ancestors lived like this." (From *Punch*.)

buyer should be informed expressly as to how far the restoration has gone, so that he may know what he is buying.

The third class—*fakes*—is one against which the public and the reputable dealers (of whom there are of course many) should strenuously fight. The word " fake " is, according to Professor Skeat, derived from the middle Dutch, *facken*, to catch ; and the number of persons who have suffered from this particular form of " catch " must be very considerable. No honest dealer can compete with the faker, and the public, which knows little about old furniture, is at his mercy. The protection of the public seems to lie in the Sale of Goods Act of 1893, which lays down that where the contract is for the sale of goods by description there is an implied condition that the goods shall correspond to the description.

A distinguished soldier (Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell) made a confession in his will. " I have " he said, " been a slave to my furniture for years." This form of slavery is shared by many householders. The moral courage to dispose of furniture is uncommon. For this reason, perhaps, our rooms are over-furnished and overcrowded. To entertain an unwelcome guest without reason seems a strange proceeding. Yet to harbour unpleasing furniture is to offend oneself daily, to say nothing of our friends. As our means permit, it is of no less our pleasure than our profit to exchange the ugly sister for a Cinderella.

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Fig. 3. " John Arnolfini and his Wife."
From the painting in the National Gallery, London, dated 1434, and showing furniture of the period.

CHAPTER I

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FURNITURE

IT is often the custom to look back at past ages with feelings of envy and the phrase "The Good Old Times" rises easily to the lips. The age of chivalry with its knights in armour, its castles and its minstrels appeals to the imagination like a play. "Many-towered Camelot" with its "fields of barley and of rye" should not, we feel, have its poetical significance imperilled by an adverse certificate from a health inspector. And it is only in modern times that research has shown the miserable cruelties and inhumanities of these early periods, the degraded state of life of the people and the foul conditions prevalent in all grades of society.

No more striking picture of such conditions can be given than that of Frederick Harrison in his essay on "The Mediæval City" in his book "The Meaning of History." ". . . The tone of the Middle Ages," he writes, "in the matter of dirt was a form of mental disease. Cooped up in castled and walled cities, with narrow courts and sunless alleys, they would pass day and night in the same clothes, within the same airless, gloomy, windowless and pestiferous chambers: they would go to bed without night clothes, and sleep under uncleansed sheep-skins and frieze rugs: they would wear the same leather, fur and woollen garments for a life-time, and even for successive generations: they ate their meals without forks and covered up the orts with rushes: they flung their refuse out of the window into the street or piled it up in the back-yard: the streets were narrow, unpaved, crooked lanes through which under the very palace turrets men and beasts tramped knee-deep in noisome mire. . . ."

A visit to a walled city such as Carcassonne, with the aid of

a little imagination, helps to confirm this picture and to refute the fallacies of some historians whose medium has been limelight and stage properties their material.

"Even in the palaces and castles of the rich," Harrison continues, "the same bestial habits prevailed. Prisoners rotted in noisome dungeons under the banqueting hall: corpses were buried under the floor of the private chapel: scores of soldiers and attendants slept in gangs for months together in the same hall or guard-room where they ate and drank, played and fought. It is one of those problems which still remain for historians to solve —how the race ever survived the insanitary conditions of the Middle Ages."

Nor were conditions improved in Tudor and Jacobean times, as indicated by the plagues which constantly recurred in London. "A house in an Elizabethan slum," writes Mr. F. P. Wilson in "The Plague of Shakespeare's London," "with a wooden framework filled in with clay and plaster, a refuse heap before the door, and filthy rushes upon the floor, provided the black rat with an ideal home." Such homes, of course, bred the black rat whose fleas carried the plague. It is curious that in these times the enemies of the rats—cats and dogs—were destroyed, as no one connected the rats with the plague.

Drainage was provided by a ditch which ran round the city walls; and of the foulness of this ditch there were continual complaints. Water was brought by water-carriers in wooden tubs hanging from a shoulder-yoke. No chemical analysis was provided.

The early period of furniture in England was one of discomfort even in the great houses. Lighting, heating, washing and sanitation had not yet resolved themselves from their elements. The English people lived an insular life, and the customs of more civilised peoples such as the Dutch had not yet penetrated. A contrast is seen in the pictures of the great Flemish Masters and provides contemporary evidence of the high degree of comfort of the Dutch houses. The famous painting in our National Gallery of John Arnolfini and his Wife by Jan Van Eyck (Fig. 3) shows an interior as comfortable in detail as the apartment of a modern house. The furnishings include a draped and luxurious bed, an elaborate mirror, a tall arm-chair showing clearly in carving the forms of Gothic architecture, a window glass to reflect welcome or unwelcome callers, a Turkey or Persian

carpet, a pair of pattens and a candelabrum. Fig. 4 shows more clearly the details of the Gothic chair and of the mirror reflecting with exquisite finish the figures in the room. Note the Stations of the Cross printed in miniature round the mirror. This amazing painting is dated 1434 (three years after the burning of Joan of Arc and during the reign of Henry VI of England), a time in which the English were embedded in the picturesque unsavouriness of the castellated period.

Sir Charles Holmes, Director of the National Gallery, writes in his book on the Dutch pictures :—" People often ask themselves or others ' Which picture would you choose if you were given the pick of the National Gallery ? ' I have noticed that the answer almost invariably takes the same form, ' Well, I suppose I ought to choose the " Bacchus and Ariadne " or something of that sort, but if I were really getting a picture for myself I should choose Van Eyck's Arnolfini.' "

Another great painter of this time, Campin (1375-1444), shows in his picture (Fig. 5) of the Madonna and Child the furnishing of the great houses of the Netherlands ; working as usual in the medium of his environment. On the left of the picture, below the shuttered window with its exquisite landscape, is a mediæval " thrown " chair made up of turned spindles, and on the right is a Gothic chest or cabinet. The Madonna is seated upon a box settle with a railed back of open turnery, and behind the Virgin is a fire screen, probably the first shown in any painting. Campin utilises this fire screen to suggest a halo or nimbus.

Figs. 6 to 8 show three mediæval interiors. Extracted from contemporary illuminated manuscripts, they are typical of the items in a wide range of pictorial records from which we may gain a comprehensive view of the furnishing of the houses of the rich folk of the period, with little or no suggestion as to how the poor were supplied with household chattels. Fig. 6 shows a bedroom scene in a great house of the period, with its draped bedstead and carved panelled chair. Figs. 7 and 8 show in detail the appointments of banqueting halls. The details in Fig. 7 include a buffet with wine cups and flagons. Behind the seated King is suspended a rich hanging which may be of carpet-work or more probably of stamped and painted leather. Fig. 8, a more elaborate scene, described as the " Table Service of a Gentleman of Quality," from a 15th century MS., shows on the right a lofty Gothic table of degrees furnished with plate. Aloft on the right is a small

minstrels' gallery with three trumpeters and in the background is a secondary table.

A complete survey of the furniture of Gothic and early Tudor times is outside the purpose of this volume, which in no sense claims to give a comprehensive history of the evolution of English furniture, but rather aims at being a guide to small collectors seeking hints in the practical politics of furnishing their homes with useful antiques.

Admirable books have been written on the furniture of from Norman to Gothic and Tudor times which to some extent have exploded the older and quite popular idea that the great houses and castles were bare of furniture. Mediæval MSS. with their brilliant illuminations show quite clearly that not only were the great houses amply furnished with essentials in standing and movable furniture, but that the principal rooms, at least, were glowing with colour afforded by hanging tapestries, upholsteries and even rugs in which Turkey-work figures largely.

It is certain that most of the Gothic furniture was picked out with brilliant pigments and gilding just as were the Gothic details of the stonework in churches and cathedrals. Inventories of furniture survive from the days of Mary Tudor and onwards, and it is interesting to note the rapid growth of household luxuries, more markedly in the principal rooms, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The annals of the poor, in relation to their furniture, have not yet been written, but as to those actually above the "submerged" we are distinctly told, in "Holinshed's Chronicle," that, in Elizabeth's reign, in houses of people of the "meaner sort" such as "inferior artificers and many farmers," there were "cupboards and plate, joined beds with tapestry and silk hangings, and tables, with carpets and fine napery." If we may argue from the particular to the general, fine carpets of Eastern origin were reserved for table decoration, as seen in several pictures in the National Gallery painted at this period.

Houses of knights, gentlemen, merchantmen and some other wealthy citizens contained "great provision of tapestry Turkey-work, pewter, brass, fine linen and thereto costly cupboards of plate."

Holinshed was published in 1587, and William Harrison, who wrote that part of the chronicles dealing with "the manner of building and furniture of our houses," records the astonishment

Fig. 4. Detail of mirror and chair from the portrait of Arnolfini and his Wife shown on Fig. 3.

Fig. 5. "Madonna and Child," by Campin (1375-1444), in the National Gallery, London.

Fig. 6. A bedroom scene from a mediaeval manuscript.

Fig. 7. A banqueting scene from a mediaeval manuscript.

Fig. 8. The Table Service of a Gentleman of Quality. From a 15th century manuscript.

Figs. 9 and 10. An early Jacobean oak chair-table shown (*above*) in its present, and (*below*) in its unrestored condition.

of old men then living in Essex " which have noted three things to be marvellously altered in England within their sound remembrance," viz: " the multitude of chimneys lately erected " . . . " the great amendment of lodging " . . . and " the exchange of vessel, as of treen platters into pewter, and wooden spoons into silver and tin." These old greybeards remarked that whereas their fathers and they themselves were contented with straw pallets or rough mats covered with coarse sheets and a good round log for pillow or bolster, with the sudden, and, to their thinking, deplorable growth of luxury, folk would not be content with less than " three or four feather beds, so many coverlids and carpets of tapestry, a silver salt, a bowl for wine (if not a whole *neast*) and a dozen spoons to furnish up the suite."

When we arrive, a few years later, at the inventories of furniture possessed by the Fairfax family of Walton and Gilling Castle, Yorkshire, compiled between 1594 and 1624, we realise that in the short space of thirty years luxury in furnishing was growing apace. The long lists of furniture in such inventories and the considerable number of fine pieces still existing *in situ* and in our museums lend colour to the idea of " the spacious days of Elizabeth."

One item mentioned in the 1624 (Gilling Castle) inventory is to our purpose here : and that is " a chair uncovered with a falling back for a table." The mention of a chair *uncovered* suggests that, as a rule, chairs were covered. Such chair-tables, usually, and with little enough reason, called " monks'-benches," are manufactured to-day and sometimes passed off as antiques. If, indeed, the originals were made in monastic times in England, we can congratulate the holy men on their possession of one of the most useful types of composite furniture—a seat, table and wardrobe all in one. Given an additional joyned-stool to sit upon at meal-times, the monk's cell was fully furnished for the daytime : a pallet bed with a frieze coverlid would complete his household equipment for the night watches.

The little chair-table shown in Fig. 9 is the genuine article intelligently restored from a state of dilapidation as seen in Fig. 10. It may well date from a period approximating to the 1624 inventory ; but it is scarcely likely to belong to pre-Reformation days. This sturdy piece of homely English oak stood for several generations in the outhouse of an East Devon cottage. The falling table-top was nailed down on the arms and the lidded

coffer-seat was used as a potato store. The table top is pin-hinged and, when occasion requires, is secured by wooden pins thrust through the runners and arm-rests. At the cottage auction sale this relic of early Jacobean days was knocked down to the one and only bidder for the sum of threepence, and if any collector can beat this as a low record he has our congratulations.

For the table-bench *in excelsis* the reader is referred to the one at the Victoria and Albert Museum assigned to a date of about the middle of the seventeenth century. It is nearly six feet in length in its composite capacity—of bench, box and table. Its carved details are quite simple in essence but rich in effect; such details are not the expression of any great school of carving, but are, doubtless, the result of the free chisel-play of the joiner at his bench. It is well to note here that failings in mere technique often lend added interest to the carver-joiner's productions of the seventeenth century. The joiner occasionally failed in his "setting out" and would finish with one panel an inch or two short in its width; and so with his carved details, e.g. in an arcading of lunettes on the top lateral style he would sometimes finish up with a half pattern, just for the lack of a little planning, as will be seen in the next illustration.

In this panelled chest (Fig. 11) we find a mixture of woods; the framing is of oak and the remainder, including the carved panels, is of elm. This piece also came from a Devon village—its last use there was as a bread bin—and as likely as not it was made in that village at some time about the second half of the seventeenth century. The nicely carved S scrolls on the uprights of the oak framing point to the period suggested. These details are carefully, but not slavishly, worked in the conventional manner, and the oak is of such a hardness that the wear of nearly three centuries has not obliterated the chisel marks. A furniture faker would probably overreach himself in softening the sharp edges and grain with acids and rubbing down with a wire brush. When we come to the floral designs on the three front wainscot panels of elm, we find things that never existed in the *flora* of Devon or of any other English county. The original lid of this chest consisted of two joined up planks of elm finished off with a simple scratched moulding; but being much warped and wormeaten, practically past repair, and as the chest was required for home decoration and not for museum use, the old elm top was replaced by a home-made oak panelled one. Obviously

it would have been better to have meticulously copied the original lid both in material and detail.

Furniture of the Gothic periods is unlikely to fall within the use, the means or even the opportunities of the small collector. Very little that he finds for his purpose will date from a period much earlier than that of early-to-mid-Jacobean. But that is not to say that he should actually despair of acquiring an Elizabethan panel-back chair, coffer, court-cupboard or refectory table. Such things could once—and not so very long ago—be acquired with comparative ease and at small cost; but times have altered. A witty writer once remarked in his hints to young reciters: "Of Taking an Encore" . . . "When you get an encore, you will instinctively know how to take it." And so with the piece of Elizabethan oak, when it does happen to come your way.

The professional furniture faker flies high, as a rule, and would scarcely waste time and material in an attempt at making a tolerable imitation of the little simple Jacobean coffer shown in Fig. 12, and even if he did, the merest tyro would scarcely be deceived. Nothing could be simpler from a constructional point of view: primitive, almost elemental, in form, age has lent it an infinite charm, and with its V-shaped end slabs it clearly shows a survival of a primitive type of coffer which by degrees grew into the full-blown wainscot-panelled chest as seen in the next illustration (Fig. 13).

In some sixteenth century chests we find the wainscot-panelling confined to the front face whilst the ends still consist of solid unframed slabs finished off with V-shaped ends to form feet. It is not an evolutionary point to dogmatize upon, but we may take it that no wainscot-panelled chest was made for purely domestic use in England much before the beginning of the sixteenth century. The term wainscot-panel is used here in a restricted sense as denoting a thin panel framed in a channelled surround (much as a sheet of glass is held in a picture frame) with sufficient "play" to allow for swelling and contraction in changes of temperature. Such treatment of material obviously made for lightness and elegance.

The chest or coffer, ecclesiastical or domestic, of early Saxon days was something from which the bulk of mediæval and modern furniture has evolved. Commencing with the mere dug-out log, it was a logical step to the six-piece box made up

from rude planks with the end slabs prolonged to form legs. A step higher from this simple constructional method is seen in the church chests of the thirteenth century, wherein the joiner mortised his heavy lateral planks into rude uprights, fixing them securely by the aid of wooden dowel-pins—square pegs in round holes. Such work was called " joyned " or " joined " work and the term has ever since stuck to the carpenter's craft. Such joyned chests afforded fair fields for the imagination of the Gothic carvers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with the result that we find the motifs on the church coffers reflecting the details of the stone traceries in the buildings. Needless to say we find, all through the centuries, reversions to type in constructional methods.

To return from the above diversions to Fig. 13, we find that the solid ends with V-shaped cuttings have given place to framed panels, and that the legs are but prolongations of the end framings. Such simple chests as this one persisted right through to the eighteenth century, and many a one dubbed Jacobean may well have been made when George the Third was King. It is clearly seen that in this little chest the simple mouldings on the framing were worked by means of a primitive tool (a gauge fittted with a shaped cutting tooth of steel, rather than a moulding-plane or plough), which sometimes followed the grain of the hard oak in the line of least resistance. Such primitive working of the mouldings is no positive proof of early manufacture as, probably, country workshop benches were restricted in their range of tools ; but the working of the bevels on the inner lines of the framing points rather clearly to a seventeenth century method. This small chest came from mid-Devon and in all probability Devon was its birthplace some time about the end of the seventeenth century.

A trap for the unwary collectors consists in the " carving up " of the fronts of simple slab-chests (such as the one shown on Fig. 12) with early to mid-Gothic details. A couple of chip-carved roundels or a little simple perpendicular tracery will, to all outward appearances, antedate it a couple of centuries. Given sufficient knowledge and skill on the part of the carver, the fraud may stand the ordeal of a very searching inquest. It is far better to buy a simple untouched chest for five or six pounds than one with Gothic ornament of doubtful origin at three times the money.

Fig. 11. Jacobean oak coffer with carved elm panels ; Imari bowl and old Oribe pottery dog.

Fig. 12. Simple early Jacobean oak coffer.

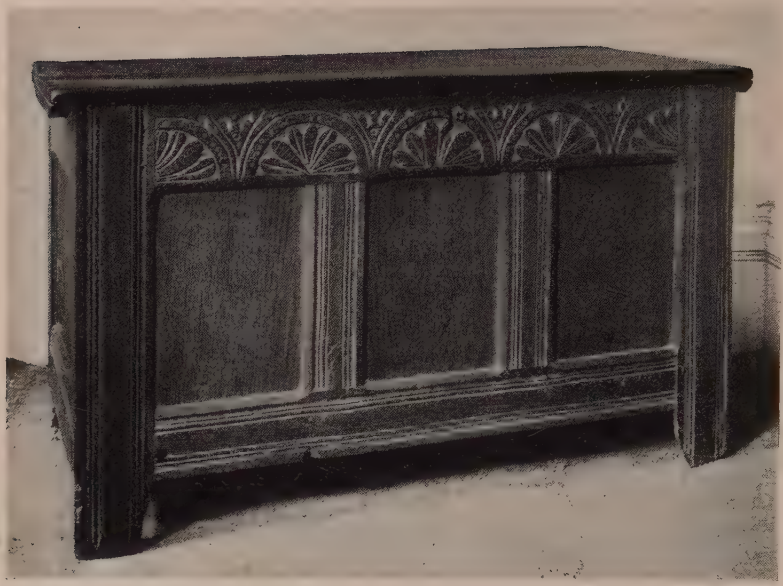

Fig. 13. Simple panelled oak coffer, late seventeenth century.

Fig. 14. Simple oak refectory table, 6 ft. 4½ ins. × 2 ft. 11 ins.

Fig. 15. Early Jacobean oak gate-leg dining table with ball turnery.

Fig. 16. Late Jacobean oak gate-leg dining table with simple turned legs.

Fig. 17 (*left*). Late Stuart single chair with peacock device in cresting and stretcher.

Fig. 18 (*right*). James I period oak single chair with leather seat and back.

In purchasing from an established dealer, the buyer has the right to demand an invoice stating that the article is of a definite, or at least approximate, age or period ; and he is also entitled to know what restorations, if any, the piece has suffered. A false description on an invoice constitutes a breach of contract and the money paid is recoverable at law, but in the case of an honest dealer the law has rarely to be invoked. The buyer at an auction sale is in a different case, as the auctioneer, whilst professing to catalogue to the best of his ability, disclaims all warranty of the goods. The auctioneer's hammer, in theory, is relentless, but in practice it is no uncommon thing for a reputable auctioneer to rescind a contract when the bargain has been flagrantly misdescribed.

The rigid oak furniture of this period finds but little welcome in the modern drawing-room, for the hard settle-bench does not tend to intimacy of conversation and the panel-backed chair is not conducive to repose. These strictures must not be taken too literally ; it is of course very much a matter of individual taste. A Jacobean bedroom, however, is quite practicable even if the full-sized Jacobean bedstead with massive turned and carved posts, panelled head boards and ponderous canopy is to be dismissed as being more suitable for a great house or as a delightful acquisition for a public museum. For a modern house or flat, the smaller variety of bedstead with short panelled back and low foot-rail is within the range of practical domestic politics, and this, provided with an up-to-date spring mattress, may be just as cosy and hygienic as the latest confection from Tottenham Court Road.

The chests of drawers of the period, as seen in Figs. 19 and 20, are just as useful as they were when made ; their variety in applied decoration is legion. In choice of woods these old chests of drawers are full of surprises ; whilst their bodies are usually of oak, with perhaps pine-wood drawer linings, their panels and sloped or intricately shaped mouldings may be of walnut, cedar, pear, cherry, or other " fruit woods." A simple Jacobean chest or coffer with rising lid affords admirable stowage for rugs and spare linen, especially if it be of the " mule " breed with a drawer at bottom—the progenitor of the chest of drawers proper—and furthermore its uses as a low table or seat are obvious. A chest of drawers or small table will serve equally well for a dressing-table ; and as modern practice has banished the wash-hand basin from the bedroom, we can dismiss all qualms as to

the appropriate wash-stand. Mirrors of the period are of course extreme rarities and the collector will probably have to look ahead to the walnut period for a toilet mirror, remembering that the woods of the walnut and oak trees make an admirable marriage.

The furnishing of an entrance-hall is merely a question of the space available. A couple of simple chairs or joint-stools, a small settle or a chair-table, as in Fig. 9, and a small table with a drawer for clothes brushes and "Bradshaw" may, of necessity, suffice. A small panelled cupboard affords storage for out-door wraps; and this may consist of anything from a simple corner-cupboard to an "armoire." If Hanway had but lived but a century or two earlier, to invent his umbrella, the times would have produced the umbrella stand; but the longest American purse will not purchase one of the Jacobean period.

For the furnishing of the dining-room the main features will be the table, the chairs and the sideboard. If the room is long and narrow, the refectory table, of the type shown in Fig. 14, is the obvious solution. The elaborately carved draw-table will be outside our scope. For a room more approaching to the square we could not do better than the gate table as shown in Fig. 15 or Fig. 16. The introduction of the "gate-leg" came when our forefathers were abandoning the great and draughty baronial dining-hall for the more cosy and private dining-parlour. It is easily portable, and its round or oval top is conducive to sociability at meal-times; for it has no definite place of state in its circumference and each guest is a "Knight of the Round Table." Its one and only drawback is its legginess, which somewhat reduces its seating capacity as compared with the rectangular fixed table. (Fig. 15 has a top which is nearly circular—about 4 feet 2 inches by 2 feet 6 inches—and its ball-turnery places it in the earlier Jacobean period. The other table (Fig. 16) is somewhat later, as seen in its long-turnery; it inclines to the oval, measuring about 4 feet 3 inches by 5 feet. Such tables are, in the main, of oak; but it is no uncommon thing to find one with the frame of oak and the top of lustrous yew-wood or walnut. All the better if it be so; and, again, the collector might be lucky enough to find one entirely of walnut. Old oak and walnut, as we have said, blend admirably in a furnishing scheme.

In collecting a set of chairs for the dining-room a wide field is open and individual taste must rule in the selection. The tall

Fig. 19. A simple Jacobean oak chest of drawers with sunk panels and shaped mouldings.

Fig. 20. A Jacobean chest of drawers of oak and various woods with raised panels.

Fig. 21. Oak joyned stool with channelled legs (Elizabethan type).

Fig. 22. Oak joyned stool with ball turnery (Jacobean type).

Stuart chair (Fig. 17), with its intricate carving and caned seat and back, is decorative and charming, but in serviceableness it is generally a failure ; fragile in conception, constant leverage from its high back—with very little counteracting splay in its base lines —has left the majority of its genus in a state of decrepitude. On the contrary, sturdy Cromwellian or Yorkshire and Derbyshire chairs may often be found to be as sound as on the day they left the maker's hands. The collector may take a word of warning about Yorkshires and Derbyshires with their delightful arcaded and lunetted backs ; they are apparently more open to the faker's operations than any other chair of the period.

Fig. 18 shows a moderately tall James I type of oak chair, with leather seat and back. With all its foreshadowing of the tall, flimsy mid to late Stuart, it has practically all the stability of the short Cromwellian chair.

Chests of drawers of the Jacobean period are exemplified in Figs. 19 and 20. The two types shown have much in common in regard to structural details. More elaborate examples show an infinite variety in applied ornament consisting of mouldings and split turnery, together with inlays of bone, ivory, mother-of-pearl, ebony and various dark and light woods. Fig. 19 shows one prevalent method of ornamentation by the geometrical arrangement of simple mouldings. Varying depths of drawers give endless scope for squares, oblongs, octagons and indescribable polygonal zig-zags.

Fig. 20, a chest with four drawers, is of average size—about 3 feet square on the front face and 2 feet in projection. This piece is in its original condition with a fine surface-patina derived from age and the constant use of polishing cloths. All the chased brass key scutcheons and half of the drop handles are original ; and the original locks are still in place secured by small clout nails. The carcase is built mainly of oak, but is full of small surprises. The framed top and side panels are of oak, but the side framing posts are of a hard, straight-grained, light toned wood. The unexposed inner surfaces reveal that these posts are of chestnut, whilst their outer faces have mellowed to the brown tone of the oak. The very substantial drawer linings and runners are of pine. The sloped mouldings framing the drawer panels are of straight-grained yew-wood, whilst all the other mouldings, and the little oblong drawer panels, are of oak. The drawers run smoothly and at perfect levels on runners fitting

into grooves cut in the drawer sides. The carcase breaks into two halves after the manner of a tall-boy, and this lends portability to a rather weighty piece of furniture. This old chest of drawers came from a farm-house in the Somerset fenlands and may very well have been there when the Duke of Monmouth set out from Bridgwater on the night of the sixth of July, 1685, to fight and lose his last battle on Sedgemoor.

Joint-stools of the period are attractive acquisitions, and the two shown in Figs. 21 and 22 afford an object lesson to the collector. The one with the vertically carves legs is Elizabethan, whilst the other with the simpler turnery is mid-Jacobean. In June, 1925, there was a dispersal of furniture at Christie's, the property of Mrs. Percy Macquoid, catalogued as "acquired on the advice of the late Percy Macquoid, Esq." The hall mark, so to speak, of that great collector and writer was on two stools very much of the types here shown; and the moral lies in the fact that the Elizabethan stool realised 58 guineas, whilst the Jacobean specimen reached only 22 guineas. As recently as March, 1927, at the same sale rooms, a pair of Elizabethan joint-stools sold for 18 guineas and another pair of the Jacobean period for 9 guineas. These were from unnamed sources; they were not in perfect states of preservation, and it is not suggested that they had all the fine qualities of the Macquoid specimens. But their sale at such prices goes to show that the small collector need scarcely despair of bargains.

In the Macquoid sale, again, a magnificent Elizabethan buffet constructed of walnut—a comparatively rare wood for the period—realised 1,200 guineas. Of world-wide fame, it was illustrated in Macquoid's "History of English Furniture" and "The Dictionary of English Furniture." In March, 1927, an exceedingly fine Jacobean oak buffet (5 feet 3 inches wide), enclosed by five doors, with back in two tiers, the panels carved with rosettes and conventional strap work, sold for 60 guineas; and it was a piece that any collector, great or small, might well be proud of.

A reference was made above to the beauty and utility of Jacobean chests of drawers. In a London sale room, in March, 1927, an item was catalogued as a Jacobean chest of four long drawers with sunk panelled fronts and ball-turned borders, 3 feet wide. It was not in perfect repair; a few pieces of moulding—quite easily replaceable—were missing, but at £9 it was a collector's

bargain. In the same auction sale a very nicely carved and panelled oak chest, 50 inches wide, went for £6 10s., and a small Jacobean oblong gate-leg table sold for £4 10s. At such a price one must not expect to purchase a full-sized gate-leg of walnut, or even of oak, with fine spirally turned legs and stretchers; but a serviceable one of simple make might well be obtained at some figure between £10 and £20.

The writers have refrained from overloading these notes with prices that could convey but little to the reader's mind in the absence of pictorial illustrations; but perhaps the few prices cited will indicate that whilst the "lesser monuments" obviously do not appeal to the elect, it is equally obvious that they are sometimes neglected by the small collector of Jacobean furniture.

In the present times when the tenants of so many large country houses, for economic and other reasons, are not in residence, oak furniture is not so greatly sought after. Much of it is dispersed and, except for pieces of first quality, it is now possible to collect genuine old oak at reasonable prices. Such pieces are eminently suitable for country and even town houses. It is advisable here not to press the collecting idea too far. No one will wish to face the problem of the Jacobean kitchen and most certainly not the Jacobean plumbing. But an oak hall or dining-room can be made a source of great interest and satisfaction and an oak bedroom is very attractive if it is remembered that oak is at its best when associated with colour. And there is, too, one further great advantage in the fact that the oak collector is not buying at the top of the market, and who knows how soon this delightful wood may come again into fashion.

CHAPTER II

QUEEN ANNE AND EARLY GEORGIAN FURNITURE

WITHOUT suggesting that the furniture of a period ranks as an index of the development of a nation, it certainly reflects the fashions and temper of the times. Life is made up of little things, and it is pleasant to look upon our old chairs and tables and to think that they are expressive of the national feelings. Thus, this piece suggests rigid Puritanism, this the gaiety of the nation in the restoration of the Stuarts, and this one, again, the swing of the pendulum back to sobriety with the advent of the Orange régime. As a matter of fact, on close examination, we find that the changes in furniture conventions were not always so rapid or clear cut as they might appear to have been at first sight. English designers and craftsmen never worked in watertight compartments; new influences were always creeping or boldly walking in, and England was ever absorbent of foreign ideas in the arts and crafts. With some truth, Art has been described as intelligent plagiarism. We certainly see this in the development of English furniture. Over and over again from Tudor days we see how English artificers were absorbing French, Italian, Spanish and Dutch ideas in form and decoration. In the furniture of the Stuart period and more particularly in the chairs, we see these influences, direct or transmitted. Moreover, we find that, however fanciful the motif

Fig. 23. A Daniel Marot chair.

Fig. 24. William and Mary walnut dressing table (without terminals).

Fig. 25. William and Mary walnut dressing table (with terminals added).

might be, it was soon translated into English and the evolution proceeded on English lines. It is remarkable that with so mixed a parentage there should emerge a furniture so unmistakably native in its feeling.

Taking the scope of the Queen Anne period as covering the reigns of William and Mary and Anne—from 1688 to 1714, roughly a quarter of a century in the making of England—it is quite remarkable what changes took place in English furniture design and construction. The date range indeed is somewhat arbitrary. It would be fastidious to place an admittedly early "piece of the period" at a nearer approximation than, say, the last two or three years of James II or the first two or three of William and Mary, or another piece, if it be "late," between the end of Anne and the beginning of George I. Again, in the middle or full period there is no sharp dividing line between the furniture of William and Mary and Anne.

The names of any artificers attached to English furniture in pre-Chippendale days are comparatively rare. William Kent and Daniel Marot are amongst the few named, and the latter is a rather elusive character. Marot was born in France in 1660; he was the son of an architect and engraver and eventually became a designer in the studio of André Charles Boulle. He was a Protestant, and in the time of religious persecution fled to Holland in 1685. It is known that he was in the employ of William of Orange at Loo, and it is highly probable that a few years later he had some considerable say in the re-furnishing of Hampton Court Palace. A set of six William III chairs "in the manner of Daniel Marot" went to auction at Messrs. Sotheby's on 13th May, 1927, when they realised £850.

In May, 1928, a similar set of six Marot chairs of superb quality, from Pinkie House, Musselburgh, Midlothian, were sold at Messrs. Sotheby's auction rooms for £1,900. Another set from the same house, not quite so fine, of perhaps rather earlier date, realised £1,150. Apart from their admitted qualities, these two last named sets of walnut chairs possessed a sentimental association. A note in the catalogue recalled the fact that Prince Charlie held his court at Pinkie House in 1745 after the Battle of Preston Pans, and, furthermore, suggested that it is not unlikely that these chairs were used by the Gallant Chevalier himself. These Marot chairs (Fig. 23) may well rank as amongst the highest expressions in furniture making in William's reign.

In them we can see both French and Dutch influence, as might be expected in the work of a man of Marot's antecedents and training. A set of eight chairs of the type and period at Hampton Court Palace shows certain similarities in details. This is a digression from the matter in hand, but if we can plainly see the foreign influence in the Hampton Court chairs we may perhaps make similar discoveries in the smaller things of our own collections.

Take, for instance, the little writing or dressing-table shown in Fig. 24, which was bought a few years before the War for less than an imitation might cost now. It probably belongs to the latter end of William's reign and has all the marks of the period upon its face and several beneath the surface. It is veneered on its plane surfaces with finely figured walnut wood, and the front, between the arches, was originally furnished with two turned wooden pendants.

In Fig. 25 it is shown that the terminals have been added. Such details, of necessity, are the first to suffer, and owners of damaged pieces would do well to study similar pieces in the museums and make the requisite replacements. The two photographs, considered together, show how great an advantage in charm and balance comes from even this small addition.

Strictly speaking, veneering was no new invention: but anterior to the "Walnut Period" the overlays were of considerable thickness, super-imposed upon flat surfaces, whilst now we are in the time when thin pliable skins of veneer were beginning to be applied to more or less convex or concave surfaces. In the "Oak Period" furniture was, in the main, built on rigid straight lines and with plane surfaces, structurally, however much those surfaces might be embellished by carving or applied ornament.

There are many variants of the table just mentioned (Fig. 25) both as to outline, detail and material. Country-made pieces may be either of oak or of solid walnut with drawer linings of oak or pine. The writers know of one in a small collection in which the legs and frame are of oak, whilst the top consists of one solid slab of English walnut.

In the later walnut age—William to Anne—we find the departure from the straight turned legs to the cabriole. The origin of the cabriole is probably Chinese, and no doubt it reached Europe principally through the Netherlands, seeing that

Fig. 26. A simple Queen Anne side table with small standing mirror.

Fig. 27. A simple Queen Anne cabriole stool.

Fig. 28. A Queen Anne kneehole writing-table with bracketed feet and original brass fittings.

the Dutch East Indiamen were doing the bulk of the carrying from the China Seas to the West; and we must also remember that William of Orange brought a large number of Dutch artificers to England. The legs of this little table are not the full-blooded cabrioles of China with claw-and-ball terminals which may be taken to represent the Imperial dragon's claw grasping the Buddhistic pearl-jewel. The claw-and-ball came to be the predominant feature of the Queen Anne furniture and was re-adopted later on in the century by the early Chippendale school. We find numerous variants of animalistic details in leg terminations, including lion's paws and even fully developed colt's feet, as in the case of the Marot chairs above referred to, whereon the fetlock hair is indicated.

The legs of the table under review are certainly suggestive of the cabriole with a French or Franco-Dutch influence. In section they are quadrangular, but are set at an angle which gives them the appearance of triangularity, and in their feet there is no suggestion of the animal. If we look at the actual French furniture of the period—say, round about 1700, towards the close of Louis XV's reign—we shall see that the Chinese cabriole was accepted as little more than a mere suggestion; and it is not stretching the point too far to suggest that the refined earlier English cabrioles are distinctly reminiscent of Louis XV models. English furniture of this time has a lightness and refinement distinct from the Dutch pieces of the same period.

Fig. 26 shows a simple Queen Anne walnut side-table with veneered top, front and sides. The legs bear no strict resemblance to the cabriole, as there are no suggestions of shoulders or knees; but the pad-foot declares its origin and cousinship, and it differs distinctly from anything we find in the Jacobean period both in body and legs. This piece was bought in pre-war days for a comparatively small sum.

Fig. 27, a Queen Anne walnut stool, shows the true cabriole leg with the simple pad-foot. A distinctive feature is seen in the shaped and beaded edge-working on the knees. More elaborate legs of the period are worked with shell and foliated ornaments on their knees.

Fig. 28 shows a knee-hole writing-table of Queen Anne design and period veneered and cross-banded with walnut. This type made its first appearance here in Queen Anne's reign and its inception is apparently quite English. It took such a hold on

popular fancy that it lived in form right through to the Chippendale period. In shaping and general economy these tables are true to type from first to last, usually with one long drawer at top and three short drawers on either side. At the back of the knee-hole recess there is a useful little cupboard which is occasionally so constructed that it can slide forward on runners. In the example illustrated there is an extra shallow drawer with a shaped front beneath the top drawer. A comparatively rare variant has a rising top disclosing an array of stationery compartments in lieu of the top pull-out drawer.

Short chests of drawers and also double " chests on chests " or " tall-boys " of the period are welcome in almost any room in the house. Their workmanship is almost invariably excellent and their lustrous walnut veneers, often embellished with refined inlaid lines and cross-bandings, would appeal to anyone capable of appreciating the finer points in cabinet work. The Queen Anne tall-boy is, as a rule, of smaller proportions than that of the mahogany period at the latter end of the eighteenth century. A distinctive feature in design is the chamfered or canted front edges of the upper half; and just that reduction of the sharp angle by an inch on either side, together with the shaping of the cornice in harmony, makes all the difference between a heavy and light appearance.

As there is a general predilection in favour of small pieces of furniture, the tall-boy is usually, in these days, relatively cheaper than the single chest, and its price at recent auctions would compare favourably with that of a modern piece of equal calibre. This comparison would scarcely hold good in the case of exceptionally fine specimens of walnut tall-boys and certainly not in the case of architecturally designed chests on cabriole or other shaped stands fitted with small drawers in the lower half. In May, 1927, at Messrs. Sotheby's auction rooms, a quite respectable Queen Anne walnut tall-boy (5 feet 7 inches high, 3 feet 8 inches wide) sold for £22, and curiously enough, in the same sale, a miniature model of one, described as early Georgian, 13½ inches high and 8½ inches wide, realised the same price. This was presumably a furniture-maker's model of the period and, as such, would rank as a distinct curiosity.

Fig. 29 illustrates a typical Queen Anne walnut tall-boy of fine quality and slender proportions; it has canted and fluted corners and, in addition to the usual complement of the six long

Fig. 29. A Queen Anne walnut tall-boy.

Fig. 30. A William and Mary walnut chest on short stand.

Fig. 31. A William and Mary bureau cabinet veneered with burr oak and walnut.

and three short drawers, has a pull-out writing slide. Fig. 30 shows a chest on stand of William and Mary to Anne type, with six drawers in the upper section and three more in the stand, which is gracefully shaped in flowing arcaded lines and supported on ball feet. A piece of this calibre has a value to-day of about £60. In a "miscellaneous properties" sale at Messrs. Christie's in June, 1927, a Queen Anne chest of six drawers on a short stand containing one drawer realised 23 guineas; it was 42 inches wide, of medium quality and in excellent repair. At the same time a short walnut chest of four drawers, 38 inches wide, reached 16 guineas. In the latter instance the piece had undergone a considerable amount of intelligent restoration, the top and feet being apparently new; but as an entirely pleasing and useful piece of furniture it was an excellent economical proposition. In the same catalogue there appeared a 34-inch Queen Anne walnut bureau, with sloping front and four drawers below, which might be described as being practically untouched by the restorer; and as it was palpably "right" and of rich golden-brown colour it met with eager bidding and reached 40 guineas.

Fig. 31 shows an interesting type of William and Mary cabinet-bureau with a fall down front, suspended on steel collapsible rods. In some of the early specimens the upper portion is enclosed by a pair of doors. Finely figured veneers in various woods, but mainly walnut, are outstanding qualities in these cabinets. The one shown in the illustration is mainly veneered with lovely toned burr-oak crossbanded with walnut—a quite harmonious scheme in colour tones. Concealed behind the visible array of small drawers, cupboard, pigeon-holes and beneath the recess there are no fewer than sixteen secret drawers and hidie-holes, of which some are so artfully contrived as, if not actually to baffle, at least to keep a casual pilferer quite busy for an hour or more. The lowest hollow member of the cornice forms the front of a shallow drawer which extends the whole length and breadth of the cabinet. The designer might well have made this drawer secure from prying eyes by the insertion of a metal pin dropped vertically through from the top. This must have been a favourite type of bureau in its own day, seeing that a quite considerable number have survived. We may well imagine the diary of a John Evelyn or a Samuel Pepys abiding for generations in the secret recesses of such a bureau. Their

attractiveness is still admitted in their present market value, which is anything from £80 to £150.

The antique furniture market is a widely fluctuating one, and, on the whole, the present market bids fair to be a good one in which to buy. Quality always tells, and it is in the nature of things that the very best, from its scarcity, is bound to possess an appreciating value. Walnut furniture, in particular, appeals to the American buyer and single specimens and " sets " of fine quality are rapidly disappearing in the direction of the United States.

The mirror brings us to an interesting phase in English furnishing. Until the later Jacobean period—about 1660—mirrors of silvered glass were rarities in English households. That is not to say they were unknown here, for indeed, previous to 1660, small mirrors in olive wood frames were imported from Venice. It is possible that such mirrors found their way into those delightful needlework outer frames which are now so difficult to discover. Such borders of coloured silks, wool and stump work belong, as their decorative motifs plainly show, to the Stuart period, and it is practically certain that their silvered glasses were of Venetian manufacture.

Glass making, other than for mirrors, was practised in England in the 16th century, but the secrets of mirror making in Venice were in the keeping of the guild and the penalty for divulging them was death.

The great English households were proud possessors of imported mirrors, of which elaborate examples may still be seen at Hampton Court Palace and other great houses. Such things were not within the means of smaller householders ; neither are they, except by the merest chance, within the grasp of the small collector of to-day.

The second Duke of Buckingham started glass works at Vauxhall after the Restoration (about 1688) and John Evelyn, the diarist, informs us that at Vauxhall they produced " looking-glasses far larger and better than any that came from Venice." But even then, and for many years afterwards, glasses with a greater measurement than four feet were scarcely attempted ; and when an extra large reflecting surface was required it became a matter of joining up two or more pieces with the junctions covered by beading. Until quite recently old mirrors were described in auctioneers' catalogues as having " Vauxhall plates."

The mirrors of the Queen Anne period—then called "looking-glasses"—may be taken as being English throughout. It is their frames that mostly concern us here and they may be divided roughly into four types: (1) Rectangular frames, square or approaching thereto, with broad ogee and convex bolection mouldings veneered with finely grained walnut and occasionally inlaid with marquetry. Others of this family had veneers or overlays of choice woods cut across the grain and matched up in patterns. From their circular wavy markings these veneers are known as "oyster-shell." (2) Narrow frames with simple ogee mouldings with their top corners either simply rounded off or gracefully shaped in arcs and cusps; these narrow mouldings may be regarded as overlays rather than as veneers, being made up of short sections two or three inches in length and much less on the curves, glued to a background frame of pine or oak. (3) Frames of very narrow ogee mouldings with broad flat veneered outer frames or surrounds worked with fretted outlines. The tops of these frames are generally shaped in suggestions of architectural cornices containing carved and gilded medallions, shells, feathers, ribbon knots and other devices.

The frames in the foregoing three classes invariably had narrow bands of gesso work on their rebates worked in "egg and tongue" and other Renaissance motifs. Later on, in the Chippendale period, we find all the elements, including the gesso beadings, of these fretted frames, but worked with mahogany veneers. A favourite device in the cornice of a Chippendale frame is a gilded bird which we shall scarcely find in the true walnut period.

Then we come (4) to the gilt gesso frame, which is the topnote in the gamut of frame making in the Queen Anne period. Gesso, as an English term, links up the arts of the painter and sculptor. As an art material it is as old as the early Egyptian Dynasties, and the early Italian painters used much gesso as foundation primings on their wooden panels and also in building up their pictures in the gilded and jewelled accessories of their saints and kings. True gesso is not of a nature and substance to be moulded and applied like plaster, but is painted, layer by layer, on to the prepared background in liquid form with an artist's brush.

The collector who owns a genuine gesso mirror frame of the Queen Anne period must realise that he possesses something considerably more than a moulded composition and something,

moreover, that he may well cling to ; and he must not begrudge the 20 or 30 guineas he may pay for a modest example or the 50 guineas or more for a better one. Needless to say that, from the connoisseur's point of view, the Queen Anne or other " period " mirror is at its best when wedded to its contemporary glass plate.

A fine and well preserved gesso mirror frame of the Queen Anne period is shown in Figs. 32 and 33. The frame was, no doubt, originally fitted with a pair of candle sconces, and the flat and unchased inverted gourds on each side of the central shell ornament suggest their position. This mirror, which recently cost the owner £40, is given as a clear illustration of the type in vogue and as something which the collector may bear in mind as a rather high attainment in mirrors generally and in gesso work in particular.

One of the most curious of old-time hobbies was the maltreatment of gesso mirrors. Fig. 32 shows the mirror in its state as purchased a few months ago covered in layers of horrid gold paint completely masking the delicate effects of the gesso work. An accidental tapping exposed a small shining surface of the original gilding and ultimately by careful work the whole original surface (Fig. 33) was exposed. The mirror frame comes to life, and even the small surface details between the relief designs are revealed. The work of removing the coverings has to be carried out with great care. A careful tapping with a small jeweller's hammer or even a coin is the method pursued, and it should, of course, be done by an expert.[1] This mirror is very characteristic of the period with its bold finely balanced scrolling and its shell ornament. Its unusual feature is a bust of Queen Anne. There is hardly a more decorative mural ornament than a gesso mirror ; imposed upon a large panel it is charming, and almost equally so on a plain wall, with the proviso that it cannot bear company and, like so many other beautiful things, must dwell alone.

In Fig. 34 is shown the broad bolection moulding with oystershell veneering. The moulding section shows two small rounds enclosing a large round. This mirror may be seen in the loan collection at the Geffrye Museum and the date assigned to it is approximately 1710—about the middle of Queen Anne's reign.

Fig. 35 (from the same museum) is of the fretted border type

[1] A solvent is said to be discovered which can be used without injury to the original gilding.

Figs. 32 and 33. A Queen Anne gesso mirror with shell and rosette decoration below and plume and scrolls, with a bust of Queen Anne above, shown (*above*) before, and (*below*) after cleaning.

Fig. 34. A Queen Anne oyster shell veneered mirror.

Fig. 35. A fretted mirror frame (*circ.* 1730) with glass of the William and Mary period.

of frame veneered with mahogany. It was probably made twenty years later than the previous example. The mahogany veneer is not necesarily incompatible with such an early date ascription as 1730, and in its unstereotyped outline there is no distinct suggestion of the real mahogany period. The shortness of this mirror suggests that it had a concomitant piece, longer but of equal width, which would have hung immediately below and have had a widened fretted outline at its base to balance the top decoration. The bevelled glass is decorated with a " brilliant cut " pattern, and this also suggests a companion mirror plate which, undecorated, would constitute the " business end " of the looking-glass. Another suggestion, which the owner, Mr. Ingleson C. Goodison, inclines to, is that the glass is one of two pieces originally framed together in an ovolo-moulded, veneered or even lacquered frame, and that the single piece was subsequently framed as it now appears. The glass may well be fifty years older than its present frame, for it shows an early type in shaping and treatment. These intagliated patterns, arrived at by a process of cutting or grinding, with an after-polishing, are mentioned in the accounts of mirror-makers and glass-grinders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It is not suggested that simple Queen Anne mirrors are rarities, and the ardent collector can generally find room for another little hanging mirror when the house is replete with standing furniture. Hence their appreciating value in the old furniture market.

The narrow frame mirror and also that with the simple fretted top are the types usually found, suspended between two posts, surmounted, as dressing glasses, upon gracefully shaped miniature cabinet stands which are sometimes elaborately fitted as dressing cases. These mirror stands are much sought after by collectors as being gems of cabinet work in the walnut period and their prices are ever in the ascending scale.

The Geffrye Museum is no place for the man—furniture lover or otherwise—who, to quote the Victorian ballad, prides himself upon the fact that he " Never goes east of Temple Bar." This delightful museum, under the care of the London County Council, is in Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, E., within ten minutes' bus ride of the Bank of England. Its old garden, a veritable green oasis, is open to the tram route and is enclosed upon three sides by a long range of Georgian almshouses preserved from the

housebreakers in 1910 by the L.C.C. and the Shoreditch Borough Council. The L.C.C. owns no great collection of furniture there, but has fitted up the Georgian rooms with variously dated panellings saved from London and provincial houses. The furniture lover can wander from room to room at will amongst an ever changing loan collection of furniture and fitments dating from Tudor to Georgian times.

One of these panelled rooms, of a date about 1740, is shown in Fig. 36. It was rescued from an old house near the Minories. The panelling of pine wood, originally painted, gives us a picture of a room in the dwelling-house of a prosperous merchant when City men of his kind lived near their businesses. The furniture shown in the illustration is mainly of the Queen Anne period, and therefore slightly antedates the panelling; but imagining the pieces, for the moment, as belonging to the room, we can think of the merchant as being quite proud of his new panelling of 1740 with his 1702-1714 furniture all around him.

Fig. 39 is a contemporary print published in 1710 and described as "The Tea Table." A rhyme is added:

> "Chief seat of slander! Ever there to see
> Thick scandal circulate with right Bohea."

Prints of interiors of this period which include furniture are rare, as artists naturally cared more for portraying persons, and usually you cannot see the chair for the gown. The present example shows on the left of the fireplace the characteristic recessed china cabinet and on the right a gesso mirror. In the grate there appeared to be the cheerful blaze of a coal fire. The round table is surrounded by a company seated on high cane-backed chairs of a late Stuart type.

For the purposes of this chapter obviously the finest specimens of walnut period furniture have not always been selected, as of course it is desired to show pieces which mainly are obtainable by the small collector and are not merely museum pieces. Fig. 37 shows a small walnut hanging cupboard, dating from about 1695, in its architectural features typical of the large cabinets and standing cupboards of the period. It is fitted with three shelves, and may be regarded as a glass cupboard. The shaping of the door panel synchronizes with that of many mirror frames of the period.

If we turn again to the Geffrye panelled room we shall see

Fig. 36. A panelled room (about 1740), with furniture mostly of the Queen Anne period, in the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road, London.

Fig. 37. Walnut corner cupboard, about 1695.

Fig. 38. Queen Anne nursing chair in walnut and beech.

outstanding examples of the spoon-backed chairs with vase-shaped splats and elaborate cabriole legs and also the concomitant settee which is but the chair duplicated or triplicated; and it is something to remember that in the walnut period furniture designers in England appear, for the first time, to have arrived at the sound conclusion that humanity being convex, chair-backs should be built on concave lines. The settee shown in

Fig. 39. "The Tea-Table." From a print published 1710.

the photograph is remarkable in having double top-rails to its twin-chair back.

Fig. 38 is something more within our scope—a low built chair, not a cut down chair, but one obviously built as a nursing chair—constructed of walnut and beech with a loose rush seat. The mixture of woods might suggest its being of country make; but if so its outlines and main decorative features, particularly the carved shell ornaments on knees and crest, follow closely upon the metropolitan models of the Queen Anne period.

Fig. 40, a small simple table with legs of baluster turnery and flat tied stretcher, is of the William and Mary period. It is

built of various woods, the top and drawer linings being of oak and the frame and legs of some fruit wood, possibly pear. It in no sense aspires to being a piece of fine cabinet work.

Fig. 41 shows a typical William and Mary period stool of refined outline and careful workmanship, with turned peg-top legs and X-scrolled stretcher. It was the age of fine turnery, and we have but to look at this comparatively simple example to see how much room there was for elaboration. The most pleasing variant is perhaps when the solid peg-top central member is elaborated into a hollow and inverted cup.

Fig. 42 shows a finely veneered walnut card-table of Queen Anne type with folding top and concertina extending frame. The shaped top is cloth covered and is provided with four oval dishings for card counters or money and at each corner is a cicular depressed space for a candle-stick.

Fig. 43 is a refined mahogany side-table of a type transitional from Queen Anne to Georgian. It may be as late as 1740. In this table there is a distinct delicacy in the shallow apron front of the frieze, relieved by small shapings on the bottom line. The simple leaf pattern on the shoulders is rather unusual and something of an earlier type than we should expect to find on a mahogany table. The legs, which are extremely thin, are of round section, which does not tend to strength and would be quite a failure in a heavier table. The designer was experimenting in lightness in his new material—mahogany. There is scarcely a doubt but that the table top was finished off with a gallery moulding, sloping outwards with a rounded top and drooping edge ; that is to say it was in the nature of a shallow tray, and that the table was, in fact, a silver-table.

This table brings us to a period which has in the past, amongst the general run of critics, been treated as a no man's land. Too late for Queen Anne and too early for Chippendale, the early mahogany period has too often received but scant courtesy and at the best (for the want of any great designer's name to use as a peg or to suggest a " school ") either early-Georgian or early-Chippendale has passed muster. Many things which have loosely been called Chippendale were palpably made when the infant Thomas Chippendale was in his cradle or even before he was born. Chippendale neither invented mahogany nor was he the first by many hundreds to use it in furniture making ; he indeed found the material ready to hand and, in addition, a great and well

Fig. 40. William and Mary table with baluster turnery and tied stretcher.

Fig. 41. William and Mary walnut stool with turned peg-top legs and scrolled stretcher.

Fig. 42. Queen Anne walnut card table.

Fig. 43. Mahogany slender cabriole table of the transitional period, Queen Anne to early Georgian.

Fig. 44. A fine walnut chair (about 1730-35, transitional period), with Queen Anne back, vase splat, lion masked cabrioles and paw feet.

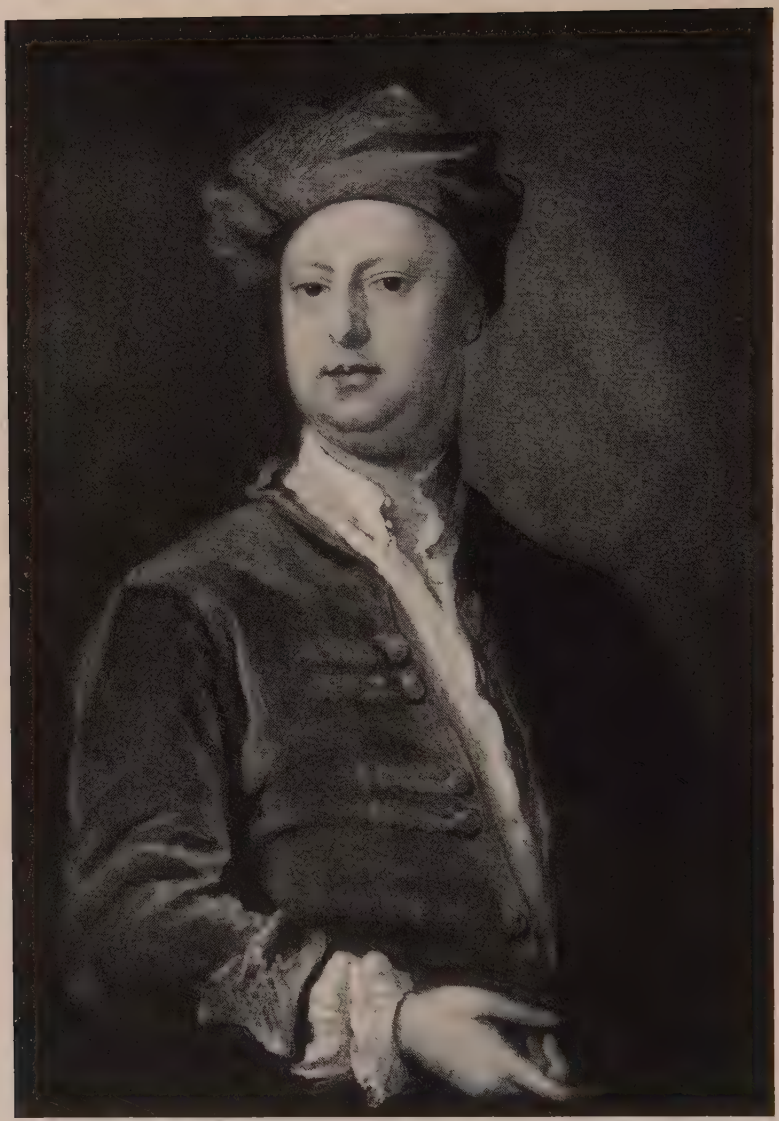

Fig. 45. A contemporary portrait of William Kent.

established school of craftsmen to inspire his genius both as an artificer and a designer. The early-Georgian-pre-Chippendale period was an era of fine furniture in England and a careful collation of the names of the many scores of furniture makers of that period—taking London alone—yet remains to be made.

Without diving into public or private archives for craftsmen's names and precise dates, there are many salient points in furniture evolution which we can see at a glance in pieces admittedly made during the reigns of the first two Georges, during the fading away of the Queen Anne conventions and before the advent of the true Chippendale vogue. It was the real Baroque period in English furniture, as with English architecture when the Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor school were building such places as Blenheim and Castle Howard. In both architecture and furniture the Baroque is to-day accepted by discerning critics as a quite logical sequence rather than as decadence in evolution.

On the console tables of mahogany or gilded wood built in the George I period we find apron fronted friezes adorned with consummately executed carved marks and rococo architectural foliage, and lions' heads with acanthus leaf tongues on the knees of cabriole legs, which end in shaggy paws and claws. The same motifs were applied to chairs of aldermanic proportions with luxuriously stuffed seats. All these opulent details were open to refining influences at the hands of later eighteenth century designers.

The evolution of the chair back from the typical Queen Anne type to the Chippendale conventions affords an interesting study. The true Queen Anne type of chair, following the proportions of the Stuart, has a tall open back, with a more or less rounded crest-line, framing a spooned vase splat which is, as a very general rule, unpierced. Quite exceptional examples are indeed found with a small shy piercing near the top of the vase; and any extra ornamentation of the simple vase was usually attained by carving its edges in low-relief at its shoulders—often in the form of volutes—or by restrained inlays. In the succeeding period, say 1720 to 1730, we find the tall backs slightly decreasing in their height, the top line gradually widening and straightening out, and the rounded shoulders giving place to upward turns. Then we find the vase being subjected to piercing into strands—but still a vase in general outline—until in the Chippendale period the back splat is made up of a bewildering

confection of interlaced riband strands with scarcely any trace of the original vase, whilst the top line is straightened out to the shape of a cupid's bow.

The tall true vase splat did not actually die with Queen Anne in 1714. Lieut.-Colonel E. F. Strange recorded in *Old Furniture*, for May, 1928, a set of ten "handsome Wallnutte chairs" supplied by Bell and Moore to the Hon. Counsellor Rider of Sandon Hall, Stafford, in November, 1734. The backs of these chairs, with their simple voluted vase splats, might, but for documentary evidence to the contrary, pass as belonging to Queen Anne's years. Their solid cabriole legs are carved at the knees with lions' faces, and terminate in lions' paws as described in the original invoice. Another walnut chair shown in the same article (with a suggested date of about 1740) shows the same type, but reduced to its simplest elements, taking us back in style practically to Queen Anne's years. It points to the fact that conventions were often many years dying. Another chair of about 1750, with its pierced vase splat, almost perpendicular side-posts, and top-rail of three upturned arcs—nearly a cupid's bow—clearly foreshadows the Chippendale school of chair backs.

Three large Masonic chairs at the Victoria and Albert Museum assigned to *circa* 1730, may, for their size alone, be accepted as exotics. They were made for the Master and Senior and Junior Wardens of a Lodge of Freemasons (No. 76—afterwards Royal Alpha Lodge) and are appropriately decorated with inlays of light wood showing various Masonic symbols. They are true to the Queen Anne type in their vase splats, but distinctly anticipate the Chippendale convention in their bow-shaped top-rails ending in bold volutes.

A fine walnut chair (Fig. 44) of about 1730-1735, belonging to Mr. Ingleson C. Goodison, is typical of this transitional period in its Queen Anne back with vase splat and its lion-faced cabrioles ending in paw feet.

William Kent (born 1684, died 1748) was intimately associated with the rococo period in English furniture, and his portrait, of which the original hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, London, is shown in figure 45. He went to Italy at the age of 26 in 1710 to study architecture, and returned to England in 1719. As in the case of Robert Adam some forty years later, Kent blossomed into a man of many parts; and we find that sometime about 1738 he was responsible for not only the architecture but

Fig. 46. A gilt console table with inlaid marble top (*circ.* 1730-35).

Fig. 47. Carved and gilt mirror (*circ.* 1730-35) with Greek key-pattern border, acanthus-scrolled corners and owl cresting.
Known to have been designed by William Kent.

Fig. 48. Mahogany card table (about 1740), with cabriole legs, claw and ball feet, and rose and ribbon border.

Fig. 49 (*left*). A glazed display cabinet with solid panel door, the stand with rose and ribbon border, acanthus knees and claw feet. In the style of William Kent (about 1740).

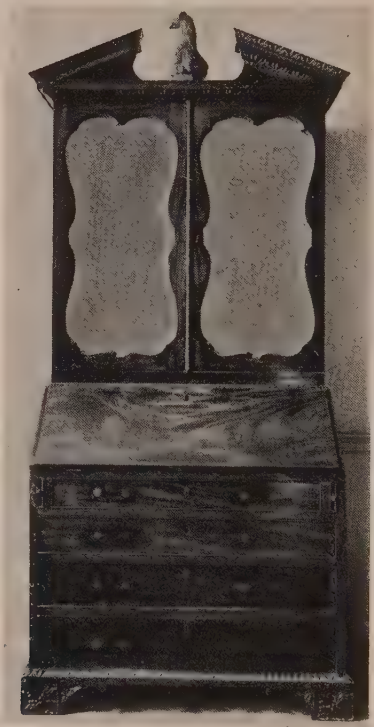

Fig. 50 (*right*). A mahogany bureau-bookcase (about 1740), with architectural cornice, broken pediment and square bracket feet, foreshadowing Chippendale.

for the decoration and the furnishing of the Earl of Leicester's seat, Holkham. Kent was apparently the first of the great English architects of the mid-Renaissance to design the movable furniture in addition to the fixed decorations of his great houses. He worked for the Crown at Kensington and Hampton Court Palaces and joined the Office of Works in 1726, where during his tenure of office he was Master Carpenter, and, later, Master Mason. William Kent's designs for furniture were published by J. Vardy in 1744, and with the aid of these published designs we get a clear outlook upon the rococo furniture, generally, of the second quarter of the eighteenth century and, particularly, upon those things which are usually described as being " in the style of William Kent." Kent's furniture naturally reflected the rococo details of the architecture of his day just as the refinements of the Adam furniture designs reflected the neo-classical architecture which arrived nearer towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the Chippendale and Heppelwhite schools were well at work.

Fig. 46, a gilt table with inlaid marble top, belonging to the Duke of Devonshire, is decorated with a Vitruvian scroll ornament on the frieze and a scale ornament on the legs, which have acanthus clothed feet. This piece, dating from about 1730-1735, in its carved details is all in the William Kent style.

Fig. 47 in the same collection and of about the same date is known to have been made by William Kent. This gilt mirror is shown on its appropriate background of pine panelling and distinctly shows Kent details in the Greek fret enclosing five petalled flowers and acanthus scrolled cresting flanking Minerva's wise old owl.

Fig. 48, a mahogany card-table of about 1740, brings us nearly to the close of the Kent period. In its main essentials it is transitional from Queen Anne to Georgian, and it shows the utmost restraint in its rose and ribbon border and shell ornament. Its cabriole legs ending in claw feet, which grasp their balls with remarkable intensity, exhibit consummate design, suggesting the rigidity which is actually attained. A craftsman would point to these legs as exhibiting the utmost economy in strength.

Fig. 49 shows a glazed display cabinet of mahogany, of about the year 1740. It was probably originally intended as a coin cabinet and was furnished with a solid panel door. The table stand, with its rose and ribbon border, rose and guilloche freize,

cabriole legs with acanthus leaf knees and claw feet, is all very much in the style of William Kent.

Fig. 50, a mahogany bureau-bookcase, the upper part with shaped mirror panels, made in about the year 1740, well foreshadows the Chippendale school. The carved details are of the simplest, mostly consisting of egg and tongue bandings and the restrained leaf ornament on the bracketed feet. The drop-bow handles are unfortunately missing. For all the severity in the carcase building of the desk, the 1740 designer refused to part with his architectural broken pediment and eagle's head on his book-case cornice.

It is not suggested that the fine furniture of the George I and William Kent periods, which, to a large extent, covers the cabriole period in English furniture, is likely to fall within the operations of the smaller collector. It is in the nature of such things built for the Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor palaces that they rarely come into the open market; and, when they do, as representing the utmost opulence in English furnishing, they realise extremely high figures. In the same sale with the Pinkie House furniture mentioned earlier in this chapter, a rare George I walnut side-table (*circ.* 1720), 47½ inches by 30 inches, with frame scalloped and carved with a scroll pendant, on carved cabriole legs with claw and ball feet, realised £650. A pair of fine walnut chairs of the same date sold for £310. Amongst the Pinkie House specimens a large painted console table of George II period with boldly carved details distinctly in the style of William Kent realised £380. Taken from their natural habitations, these ornate pieces might well find new homes with perfect propriety in modern palatial business premises, but would be overwhelming in any home of modest proportions. The six specimens—Figs. 44 and 46 to 50—selected to illustrate these notes, fine as they are, are comparatively simple examples of furniture which could only have been made for people of considerable means; and they are put forward as suggesting the main elements found in the transitional period furniture of the first half of the eighteenth century, leading up to the very popular furnishing at the hands of the well-known designers of George the Third's reign.

CHAPTER III

THE CHIPPENDALE SCHOOL

WE may imagine the shade of Thomas Chippendale taking a stroll from his shop and factory in St. Martin's Lane. He would, no doubt, glance at the wares exposed for sale in the shop windows, and he would be astonished to find innumerable articles of furniture purporting to be the work of his hand. He might fall to calculating what fortunes might have accrued to his descendants if perpetual copyright could have been applied to his designs. Had Chippendale, in fact, possessed the resources of Mr. Ford he could never have produced the furniture attributed to him. Instead he had but one factory, and at the date of his fire, 1755, he could have employed but a moderate staff, as, although apparently his whole workshop was destroyed, there were only therein the chests of twenty-two workmen.

Moreover, his work being of the quality of craftsmanship, his output could not have been a large one. It should not, however, be assumed that because a chair was not made by Chippendale it is not a Chippendale chair. He invented or adapted fashions both in design and character which his contemporaries followed, and, it may be, even surpassed. All the cabinet world is apprenticed to him. His eye, like the poet's, in a fine frenzy rolling, borrowed styles from every age—Egyptian, Chinese, Gothic, French, Dutch—and to all these he added an Engish influence so that the nationality of his furniture is unmistakable. Chippendale, however, had no place in society. He was regarded as a maker of furniture living over his shop ; and the handicraft trades worked very hard in those days, as we read that in 1747 hours from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. were common.

Chippendale's Westminster was a very different place from

the Westminster of to-day. Imagine streets without paving or at their best made up of rough and broken pavements "so covered in garbage," according to a writer in 1756 quoted by Mr. and Mrs. Webb, "as to make them scarcely visible to the most cautious passenger by day." Open cellar-flaps and unprotected coal-shoots had to be avoided. The water from the gutter-spouts poured on your head. Gay wrote :—

> "Let due civilities be strictly paid,
> The wall surrender to the hooded maid."

Down the centre of the street ran a stream of dirty water and worse. The pig was the only scavenger. Writing of Westminster streets in 1751, Fielding referred to "the great irregularity of their buildings, the immense number of lanes, alleys, courts and bye places." "Whoever sees them," he continues, "must think they have been intended for the very purpose of concealment, they could not have been better contrived." Mrs. George, in her admirable "London Life in the 18th Century," quotes another writer as saying in 1722 that the streets were as "dangerous in the night as they are in Padua." St. Martin's Lane, where Chippendale's shop was situated, was surrounded by unsavoury neighbourhoods. Gay's description in his "Trivia" no doubt still obtained :—

> "O may thy virtue guard thee thro' the roads,
> Of Drury's mazy courts and dark abodes."

And much later in the century Dr. Johnson wrote :—

> "Prepare for death if here at night you roam,
> And sign your will before you sup from home."

"When the real history of the people comes to be written," writes that great Londoner, Walter Besant, "it will be found that as regards the people of these islands they sank to their lowest point of degradation and corruption in the middle of the eighteenth century—a period when they had no religion, no morality, no education and no knowledge and when they were devoured by two dreadful diseases and then prematurely killed by their excessive drinking of gin."

The Chippendale furniture which has descended to us came, of course, from the houses of the well-to-do. The poor, as may be judged from Hogarth, whose pictures, according to Lamb, "must be read rather than looked at," had little that could be

called furniture. Even the standard of life of the rich, at least as regards hygiene, was low. There were, of course, no bath-rooms and the sanitary arrangements approximated to those of the ancient Britons. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that, even in London, was it made compulsory to drain houses into sewers.

Contemporary writers do not mention Chippendale: diarists neglect him: poets ignore him. Even Boswell, who, like him, was elected a member of the Society of Arts (the qualification for which was no more than the payment of the subscription), makes no mention of him. Chippendale, however, remains the most important influence on English furniture. Many of the earlier cabinet-makers, as evidenced in pieces in Hampton Court Palace, signed their productions. Chippendale, however, does not appear to have signed even his finest furniture, although some few of his pieces are identifiable by the invoices in the possession of the descendants of the original owners. Fine examples of the contemporary French furniture were often signed by the makers.

The fact that Chippendale himself was not the actual maker of the tens of thousands of pieces of furniture attributed to him is no reflection on their authenticity. The personal factor in art is by no means general. Names seldom attach themselves to the productions of stained glass and of tapestries even in the great periods. Collectors, however, either of simple or expensive pieces, need nor despair of possessing genuine examples. The character of Chippendale furniture is clearly defined if we accept the term in a generic sense and regard Chippendale furniture rather as a vintage to which the good taste of the mid-eighteenth century brought flavour and bouquet rather than the production of any particular proprietor. " Is my chair of eighteenth century manufacture and is it of Chippendale character ? " is all that need be asked.

Nevertheless, a great debt is due to the inspiration of Thomas Chippendale. Even the designs of simple pieces show the effects of his surprising range of taste. The small collector can well afford to leave to others the search for Gothic Chippendale (surely the least attractive of his phases), but a simple Chinese Chippendale chair is not beyond his hopes ; and if by good luck he discovers an arm-chair with cabriole legs he will remind himself that this form came to us from Egypt, via China, Holland and France, and that the claw-and-ball foot, if his chair is fortunate

enough to possess this form, is purely Chinese, the ball being the jewel of Buddha clasped by the dragon's claw.

The popularity of the furniture of Thomas Chippendale and his school continues unabated. The reason is not far to seek. The dining habits and tastes in our own day, as regards our homes, are in accord with those of Chippendale's time. It is true that diners at restaurants prefer the furniture styles of Louis Quinze, Louis Seize, or the Empire, or even that of the underworld known as Jazz, but in their own homes the comfort, peaceful charm and essential restfulness of the Chippendale dining-room is unchallenged. No room is so clearly stamped with the best feeling of the English style of furnishing. The drawing-room and the bedrooms in a modern house frequently draw upon the styles and colours and ideas of all the nations of the earth. It is only the dining-room which with any purity survives. After dinner port drinking is rather out of the fashion, but the make up of the English dinner, although somewhat reduced in weight, does not differ from that of the mid-eighteenth century. It has been embellished, decorated and garnished; but the structure remains the same. And so it is that the dining-room of Chippendale's day remains the most fitting background for the English dinner.

Collectors of simple furniture have at least the satisfaction of knowing that their undoing is not one of the great prizes. To produce a highly carved and galleried Chippendale silver table which might sell for hundreds of guineas is one proposition, but a simple Chippendale chair which would only sell for a small sum is hardly ambitious enough for the skilled furniture crook. Still there are thousands of such chairs up and down the country of which it may be said that they have never stood on the sawdust of eighteenth century workshops, and that even the Victorian period knew them not. The old advice is still the best. The more one is really familiar with the good looks of a genuine piece (as is seen, say, at the Victoria and Albert Museum) the less one is likely to be deceived by the impostor. And the best practical hint that can be given is—buy from a dealer you can trust!

The collector of chairs of this period suitable for a dining-room will have to be satisfied with those of a simple sort and of various patterns. A set of chairs, even of a plain kind, are for the few. Fig. 52 is a simple type of Chippendale arm-chair with a pierced back (a form shown in Chippendale's "Director") and

Fig. 51. An illustration for " Pamela " by Highmore (1692-1780).

Fig. 52. A simple Chippendale armchair with pierced back-slat.

Fig. 53. A mahogany knee-hole writing desk of the early Chippendale period.

Fig. 54. Panelled room from a house at Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire (dated 1740), now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 55. Another view of the room shown in Fig. 54.

nicely shaped and proportioned arms. Twelve pounds would be a moderate sum to pay for it.

There is no real reason why chairs should be in sets, and there is much interest in collecting chairs in singles or pairs or trios which have a family resemblance. Georgian dining-tables are still inexpensive, and a sideboard of the period, so long as a small size is not essential, is still obtainable at a reasonable price. A kneehole writing-table is an interesting addition to a dining-room. That shown in Fig. 53, the dimensions of which are 2 feet 6 inches by 1 foot 7 inches, is rather an attractive example, and its value is about £30, more rather than less, because small furniture is sought after. The bracket feet, with the ogee arch of earlier days, is a feature, as is the original brass furniture. These little writing-desks have great resources of room, including the under cupboard and the many side drawers as well as the slip drawer for pencils. Nevertheless, however attractive, they are more adapted for the writing of an occasional letter than for serious work, for which the pedestal-table is more suitable. It is curious commentary on modern fashion that the roll-top desk, which at one time displaced the pedestal library table of the Chippendale period, has now ceased its vogue and most busy people have returned to the broad top and roomy drawers of the Chippendale style.

History periods are self-contained only in text-books. The influence of Cromwell did not cease with the Cromwellian period, and although the Victorian period is not blameable for the acoustics of the Albert Hall, Victorian architecture still depresses us with its discordant ugliness and melancholy uniformity. Furniture periods also overlapped. The short reign of Queen Anne, in which walnut wood was popular, was never able to displace oak, and collectors search in vain for a walnut dining-table or sideboard. In Chippendale's time the earlier furniture necessarily had its place in the house. Fig. 51 is a contemporary picture (middle of the eighteenth century)—an illustration to Pamela painted by Highmore (1692-1780)—and in it we see an early form of Chippendale table with scroll-feet showing the French influence and damask covered stuffed chairs of an earlier period. Figs. 54 and 55 show a panelled room from a house in Wooton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, of about 1740, more typical of a suitable setting for the furniture of Chippendale. Fig. 54 shows the recessed windows and the " Chinese " wall-paper so popular in this period. It was painted in England from Chinese designs and bears on the

back the tax stamp G.R. ; and Fig. 55 shows carvings above the fire-place (which is of rather later date than the rest) of acanthus sprays which Chippendale used with consummate effect in his mirrors—which alas ! are beyond the reach of the small collector. Even in his day the mirror was the most expensive of his pieces, but this was due not to the cost of the carving but of the glass. The little brackets were constructed to hold the garnitures of Chinese blue-and-white jars and vases so much the fashion in his day.

Research which has for its object contemporary eighteenth century interiors is doomed to disappointment. There is nothing in England to correspond, for example, to the work of De Launay (1739-1792), the most eminent French engraver of his time, whose interiors are distinguished by their exquisite treatment and delicate detail. Hogarth (1697-1743) is probably our best source of contemporary pictorial information in this country. Fig. 56, with a family group at tea, shows the familiar Chippendale tripod table and chairs of an earlier period ; but Fig. 57, being scene 2 from " Marriage à la Mode," is one of the best contemporary examples of an interior of this time. The classical forms of the architecture are noteworthy, also the marble mantelpiece with its ornaments of Chinese porcelain figures, including Hotei, the god of plenty—clearly in derision of the prevailing fashion. The candelabrum of carved and gilded wood in the background, and the stuffed chairs on cabriole legs with shell decoration, and the card-tables, are pre-Chippendale, showing again the overlapping of the periods. Other items to be noticed are the pole-screen and the tea-table, similar in form to that shown in the Highmore picture (Fig. 53). The heaviness of the furniture is probably not due to its workmanship but to the fact that Hogarth, unlike the French artists, was so absorbed with the human side of his story that pains were not put into the drawing of the furniture. The " Marriage à la Mode " series was painted in 1745, but there is curiously little in the room in the way of furniture to correspond to our ideals of the Chippendale style.

Another picture, Fig. 58, by Hogarth (in the collection of Sir Herbert Cook, at Doughty House, Richmond, Surrey by whose kind permission it is reproduced) shows another interior of the period of Chippendale. One table corresponds to that in " Marriage à la Mode " and on the left is shown a very crude folding trestle-table more suitable for a road-side tavern

Fig. 56. " Family Group at Tea," by William Hogarth (1697-1764).

Fig. 57. A scene from " Marriage a la Mode," by William Hogarth (painted 1745).

Fig. 58. A family group by Hogarth.

and which we can safely say was not in the manner of Chippendale.

The frontispiece shows an interior by Zoffany, who lived from 1733 to 1810, entitled "The Dutton Family," which was purchased at Messrs. Christie's in June, 1929, by Mr. D. H. Farr. This attractive picture was painted about 1760, and is a rare example of the domestic life and furnishings of the period. In the centre is a table possibly of laburnam wood and clearly showing the French influence. The stuffed chairs are presumably of mahogany, but are unfortunately for furniture illustration somewhat obscured by their occupants. A marble mantelpiece of Adam type encloses a coal fire and the fender is of pierced brass. A carved wooden candelabrum, a mirror and a deftly painted pole-screen complete the visible furniture of the room. This picture with its beautifully balanced grouping, its fine sense of colour, and its charm of domestic intimacy is certainly one of the best English interiors of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 59 is an illustration of a painting by Pugh and is dated 1771. It is a characteristic scene of a perruquier practicing his profession upon the head of a sleepy gallant. The furniture of the room includes a series of stuffed chairs—clumsily drawn, as is often the case in English interiors—also a pole-screen, a girandole mirror and a tall secretaire surmounted by a broken pediment.

Figs. 60 and 61 show two simple forms of fretted mirrors of this time, the first with a bird on the wing, unknown to ornithologists but commonly found in Chippendale mirrors. These mirrors have been copied in hordes, as of course their manufacture is very easy, consisting as they do merely of a little fretwork and simple carving. The second (Fig. 61) is a smaller mirror for shaving, with a curious little medallion decoration in gilt. The outline is very pleasing. Both mirrors have the original glass and are valued at about 6 guineas each.

Fig. 62 is a serpentine fronted chest of drawers with beautifully matched quarterings of mahogany veneers. The fluted canted corners, moulded top-edge and bracketed feet are all good features. The brasses are modern. Before the war this piece cost £10; to-day its value is nearer £50.

Fig. 63 shows a group of Chippendale furniture taken in a charming old house, No. 1, Hampstead Square, Hampstead, built in 1720 when George I was King, two years after Chippendale's birth and surely an ideal background for his furniture.

In the window is seen a serpentine card-table, which has an unusual feature in its small drawer in its front; in the centre a typical Chippendale tripod tea-table; and in addition we have a corner chair, a rather fine arm-chair, and a single-chair, the former with the claw-and-ball feet of his earlier period. The steel fender, which came from Ken Wood House, is approximately of the same period as the furniture. In Fig. 64 are illustrated two chairs belonging to the same owner, with recessed seats which are generally associated with country-made chairs. These examples are found constructed of oak, beech, elm and other native English woods as well as of imported mahogany.

In Fig. 65 are examples of chair-backs from Chippendale's own book of designs—the "Director"—published in 1762. No doubt these types of chair-backs were made many years before the book was published. Many of the "Director" designs are often so extravagant as to suggest that they were lures for those who then corresponded to the war-profiteers of our day. The chair-backs in the illustration, however, are such as we accept as being typically Chippendale and are styles familiar to all collectors of his furniture.

When at a great auction room a picture, say, by Rembrandt, for which the artist received but a small sum, is sold for thousands of guineas, there is a feeling that somehow or other the artist has suffered wrong. If this principle be a true one, the shade of Chippendale must be singularly perturbed as it hovers over the chimneys of our fashionable auction rooms. Even allowing for the difference in money values, the sums he received for his work were, measured by our modern standard of appreciation, ludicrous. Mr. Oliver Brackett in his masterly work on Chippendale, quotes extracts from Chippendale's accounts for furnishing Nostell Priory. Such items appear as :—

10 Mahogany Parlour chairs covered with horse hair and double brass nailed .	£12	10	0
2 Mahogany Elbow chairs to match . .	£7	0	0
6 Mahogany chairs with arms for the library, the carving exceeding rich in the antique taste, the seats covered with Green hair-cloth	£36	0	0

The last set give the impression of a thousand guinea lot.

Fig. 60. Chippendale fretted mirror with bird ornament.

Fig. 61. Chippendale fretted mirror with medallion decoration.

Fig. 62. Serpentine-fronted mahogany chest of drawers.

Fig. 63. A group of Chippendale furniture in an early Georgian house at Hampstead.

Fig. 64. Two mahogany Chippendale chairs with recessed seats.

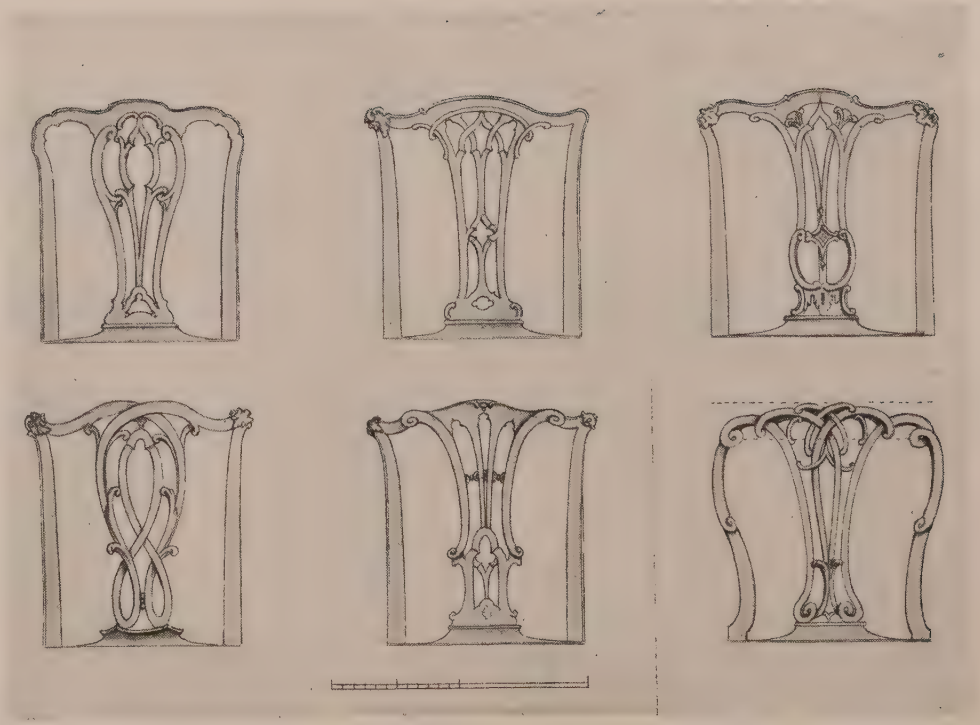

Fig. 65. Drawings of chair backs by Chippendale for the "Director."

The only costly items in Chippendale's accounts are for the glass (not the frames) of the mirrors. Thus we read :—

A very large Pier Glass . . .	£290 0 0
A superb frame to do., with very large antique ornaments exceeding richly carved and highly finished in Burnished Gold	£70 0 0

or again :—

A fine looking glass—91 × 57½ . .	£160 0 0
A very large elegant frame to do. With antique ornaments exceedingly richly carved and highly finished in Burnished Silver with a large Headplate and broad looking glass borders with 2 paintings on do., etc.—complete .	£75 0 0

In the present day, although one likes to see the old glass, it is the frame, and not the glass, which has the value.

In the connection of prices for Chippendale's furniture an interesting manuscript was sold at Sotheby's on June 19th, 1928, and was catalogued as follows :—

> CHIPPENDALE (Thomas) Account to David Garrick receipted and signed, 2 pp. folio, being the Account for furniture, etc., supplied from Jan. 24th to July 18th, 1770, totalling £56 12s. 11d. At the end is a detailed receipt of four lines in the hand of Chippendale with his signature. Amongst other items supplied are "A Mahogany Pillar and Claw Table with an Oval Top, £1 11s. 0d. And 3 Large Mahogany dining tables with compass ends and made to join together, £10 10s. 0d."
> ENDORSED IN GARRICK'S HAND—"Mr. CHIPPENDALE. PD. JUNE, 1771."

The price at which the MSS. was sold was £27.

It is of course a matter of research and also for conjecture to determine how far Chippendale was in fact a dominating factor in the furniture of his time, or rather whether he was a sort of generic term (like Gothic architecture). There were large

numbers of furniture makers contemporaneous with him; and there is nothing to suggest that he had any sort of patent rights over any particular design. What we know for certain is that the terms Chippendale, Heppelwhite or Sheraton furniture were not contemporary terms, and that they are now general terms covering the efforts of many craftsmen. The classification and the christening of these designs has been left to later generations.

CHAPTER IV

THE HEPPELWHITE SCHOOL

GEORGE HEPPELWHITE,[1] like his immediate forerunner Chippendale, was not only a furniture maker but a designer, and only just missed being a publicist. He was apprenticed to Gillow of Lancaster and presumably he was a country-born craftsman. The fact that he was making furniture in Redcross Street, St. Giles's, Cripplegate, in 1760 is beyond dispute; but little is known of his personal history in London beyond the proving of his will in 1786, and that he was not buried at St. Giles's Church. The one fact which chiefly concerns us is that he was making furniture during the heyday of the Chippendale conventions. Apart from the furniture made by or attributed to his hand, his principal monument is the posthumous book of designs, "The Cabinet Maker's and Upholsterer's Guide," published in 1788. With all its 300 illustrations the book is but a mere commentary on the more or less contemporary furniture which passes under the generic name of Heppelwhite.

The illustration on Fig. 66 affords a quite useful lesson in Heppelwhite furnishing. The background shows painted pine panelling in a Georgian house at Kensington of a date about 1720. The three-piece dining-table, plumed chairs and wine-cooler are typically Heppelwhite. Incidentally the Persian rug approximates in date, whilst the mirrors are earlier and the sideboard slightly later. A detailed photograph of two of the complete set of chairs is given in Fig. 67, and of the brass-banded wine-cooler in Fig. 68.

[1] We have adopted the spelling of Heppelwhite as it appears in the first edition of the guide.

In arriving at the mid to late Georgian period in English furnishing we are dealing, almost, with an exact science—at least with a well-recorded craft. It is the age of published designs. Chippendale was the first of the great publicists of the mahogany period with his "Director" in 1754, and A. Heppelwhite & Co. followed suit with the "Guide," first published in 1788. In the interim, Manwaring's designs in 1765 and 1766 were but Chippendale with some differences. Ince and Mayhew, who published "The Universal System of Household Furniture" in 1762, may be counted as amongst the lesser lights, and we may be thankful that their system was not universal; but it may be discourteous to dismiss them with such curt reference. The time will come, if it has not already arrived, when collectors will specialize in Ince and Mayhew and Manwaring furniture. At the Victoria and Albert Museum there is an interesting mahogany chair labelled as being "in the manner of Manwaring."

The Heppelwhite "Guide" was published two years after George Heppelwhite died, and "A. Heppelwhite & Co.," on the title-page, stands for Alice, his widow, and her partners. The "Guide" aimed at being up-to-date, and it is more than probable that the actual work of Heppelwhite, as far back as 1760, does not appear therein. The preface says: "... though our drawings are all new, yet as we designedly followed the latest and most prevailing fashion only, purposely omitting such articles whose recommendation was mere novelty, and perhaps violation of all established rule, the production of whim at the instance of caprice, whose appetite must ever suffer disappointment if any similar thing had been previously thought of ... and though we lay no claim to extraordinary merit in our designs, we flatter ourselves they will be found serviceable to young workmen in general, and occasionally to more experienced ones." As an example of prim and laboured English this is hard to beat.

It is laid down in the "Guide" that the general dimensions of chairs should be: "Width 20 inches, depth of seat 17 inches, height of seat frame 17 inches and total height 3 feet 1 inch." Nice points are in the instructions that "Chairs in general are made of mahogany with bars and frame sunk in the hollow, or rising in a round projection, with a band or leaf on the inner or outer edges," and that "Mahogany chairs should have seats of horse-hair, plain, striped, chequered, etc., at pleasure." It is a rare thing to find a chair of the period with its original horse-

Fig. 66. An early Georgian panelled room in Kensington, with Heppelwhite furniture.

Fig. 67. Heppelwhite chairs with plume and riband decoration, from the set shown in Fig. 66. About 1760-75.

Fig. 68. A mahogany wine-cooler with brass banding (about 1760-70).

Fig. 69. A Heppelwhite mahogany armchair with heart shaped back (*circ.* 1770-80).

hair covering in respectable condition ; indeed, the nail-holes of several re-coverings are more often discernible. The writer has had such chairs re-covered in horse-hair—a light green stripe on a white ground—and, provided that it does not clash with the general colour scheme in the room, is of the opinion that nothing could be more suitable.

The " Guide," in its preface, mentions 47 classes of furniture, and, amongst 300 items, illustrates 30 chairs, 5 stools, 6 window seats and 8 sofas. Of the sofas seven are of the stuffed-all-over varieties and the remaining one consists of a quintupled shield-back chair with an arm at each end. (This " Bar-Back " Sofa is shown in Fig. 77.) The thirty chairs show a great diversity of treatment in legs, seats and backs, as shown in Figs. 74, 75, 76. As to the backs, the demi-shield with camel-back top-rail predominates, and the wheat-ear and plume of feathers are conspicuous in ornamentation. If the plumes have any real significance and were not merely adopted as a pleasing decorative design, we may assume that they represent the Prince of Wales's feathers. George, Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV, was grandson of Frederick, Prince of Wales. Frederick's badge, it has been suggested, was used as a furniture decoration, and makers or designers aspiring to princely favour might well have repeated it when the future George IV was in his teens. It would be stretching the point too far to assume that all the plumed chairs were made for princely use, just as it is scarcely likely that all the crown-and-cupid chairs were made for Charles II. An imaginative writer might suggest that the Heppelwhite wheat-ear decoration was emblematical of " Farmer " George III. Some few of the Heppelwhite book designs show chair-backs with clearly defined vases as central members, carved, apparently, in a relief much too bold for the sitter's comfort ; but such exotics may not have attracted the buying public to any great extent.

There is an entire absence of stretcher bars and straining rails in the dining or parlour chairs shown on the plates dated 1787, whatever may have been George Heppelwhite's practice or that of his contemporaries nearer to the year 1760. The only stretcher strengthened chair shown is one that we should to-day call a " grandfather " or " wing " chair. It is shown as a companion to a " Gouty Stool " and the text gives it as " A design for a ' Saddle Check ' or easy chair, the construction and use of which is very apparent." This name is not so apparent in

meaning as the use is to the modern collector or as the construction would have been to the contemporary chair-maker.

The set of seven chairs (reverting to Figs. 66 and 67) with camel-back top-rails, plumes and sturdy unmoulded square legs and stretcher bars conforms to the conventions of the Heppelwhite phase between 1760 and 1775 or thereabouts. With all their admitted beauty they would not perhaps have been considered sufficiently elegant for the widow Heppelwhite and partners to include them in the "Guide." Fig. 69, an undoubtedly elegant chair with pull-over seat and heart-shaped shield back, is well up to the high-water level of 1780. The skirted toes to the front legs might also suggest that as an approximate date. A matched set, say six singles and one arm, of similar qualities might well realise 250 guineas or more at auction, whilst stray specimens might be acquired for considerably less in proportion per chair.

The nice little tub or well chair, scarcely a "Burjier" of the design books, shown in Fig. 70, was found by a mid-Devon dealer some fourteen years ago. Its earlier history is unrecorded, but the Heppelwhite period is written in all its lines. The other baby chair in Fig. 70, with spindle-turnery frame and rush seating, has no claim to Heppelwhite influence. Bought in the Kingdom of Kent, it was probably made in the Duchy of Lancaster some time towards the end of the eighteenth century, and is inserted here as a contrast in simplicity.

It is amongst the common errors in furniture lore to assume that the majority of mahogany furniture of admittedly post-Chippendale design, made between 1770 and 1800, is "Heppelwhite" when plain and "Sheraton" when inlaid or painted. The Heppelwhite text and plates explode all such ideas of watertight compartments. In the Heppelwhite plates we can find indications of a wealth of refined inlays, some carvings in relief, and notable mention of both painting and japanning. Incidentally the painted furniture, according to instructions, was not to be built of mahogany. Two chairs are also shown as suitable for cane seatings.

The mention of cane brings us to the Heppelwhite sleeping cot (Fig. 71), which was with presumed, if not proven, satisfaction, used by a child of the early George V period. The spirally-twisted pillars are reminiscent of the bedposts shown in the Heppelwhite "Guide."

Fig. 70. A Heppelwhite child's well chair and child's spindle chair.

Fig. 71. A Heppelwhite mahogany and caned child's sleeping cot (late eighteenth century).

Fig. 72. A Heppelwhite mahogany armchair with classic urn decoration (late eighteenth century).

Fig. 73. A Heppelwhite walnut armchair with plume decoration (late eighteenth century).

In the Victoria and Albert Museum collection there are at least four arm-chairs labelled as being "in the style of Heppelwhite," two of which are reproduced below. One of the four has a concomitant single chair close handy. Accepting the precise ascription, they afford an interesting lesson in chair details towards the close of the eighteenth century. They all four have either shield-shaped, round or oval back frames which we instinctively or by common consent disassociate from anything purely of the Chippendale school.

Taking number one—there is no space to illustrate this example here—we find a mahogany chair with a back frame which is distinctively Heppelwhite—a bold shield with comparatively simple splat—slightly suggestive of a lyre in its lower half, surmounted by carved wheat-ears. The central ornament applied to the splat consists of an oval medallion inlaid with lighter wood in a fan pattern. The legs are strengthened by plain stretcher bars. The front legs are moulded much in the manner suggested in the "Heppelwhite Guide" and are of square section or nearly so; that is to say, the inner fourth angles are only slightly chamfered, whereas the typical Chippendale leg is, with heavy chamfering, a well-defined, if irregular, pentagon in section. In the present case there is little more than a reminiscence of Chippendale in the slight chamfering.

The second example (Fig. 72) gives us the same bold camel-back shield framing a more elaborate confection of narrow ribands and drapery enclosing something slightly suggestive of a classic urn. At the top, under the arching, is a rather large carved oval medallion. The leg moulding is similar to that in the last mentioned; the stretchers are retained whilst the chamfering is omitted, leaving the legs quite square in section. In this last detail we see one more little step in advance from the Chippendale vogue.

The third example (Fig. 73), of walnut wood, leaves Chippendale quite cold. The back frame is a distinct oval containing a narrower oval splat made up of grooved bands hung about with a looped drapery supporting the Prince of Wales's feathers, which are tied with a riband knot. The seat is serpentine-fronted with the frame edge carved with narrow perpendicular fluting broken in the centre by a small shell pattern inlay which is repeated on the facets at the top of each front leg. There are no stretcher bars, neither should we expect them attached to

slender tapering and fluted legs. The small neo-classical motifs on the seat-frame rather point to the Adam influence.

The remaining example is a mahogany chair with circular back frame enclosing five bars disposed urn-wise. The shaping of this chair-back to accommodate the sitter shows consummate craftsmanship. The stretcherless legs are distinctly French cabrioles with scrolled toes. The pattern books of the period describe all such chairs as " French," and they *are* indeed " fickle and fine—and French ! "

The few points hinted at in these four museum chairs are sufficient to suggest the rapid advance in chair build and ornament which took place in the early post-Chippendale period. The vase suggestion in the splats was, in the main, rather a matter of devolution, seeing that generally the so-called vases are as far removed from real vases as the Corinthian column is from its Egyptian prototype made up of mud and Nile reeds. The evolution of the vase splat in chair-backs affords an interesting study. The Queen Anne vase is a vase indeed in outline, and with the gradual change in material from walnut to mahogany, we still find the vase practically the same in its outline and unfretted surface. By 1750 we find the outline retained with the surface pierced, and within a further ten or fifteen years there is little left but the suggestion of a vase made up of strands and ribands.

Four reproductions from Heppelwhite's " Guide " (Figs. 74 to 77) show quite clearly some types of chairs and a settee or sofa which were being made in 1787. From these and other illustrations in the " Guide " we get a clear view of the salient features in the build and decoration of the chairs of the Heppelwhite period, and can also glean a number of useful hints as to their coverings and the methods of the nailing on of their seat covers.

Heppelwhite's designs suggest a fragility in chair construction which we do not find in the specimens which have survived ; but of course we may accept the drawings as pictures and not as " plans to scale." It is interesting to note that one of the " State Chairs " has cabriole legs ending in well-defined hooves, reminding us of the terminals of the Daniel Marot chairs of William and Mary's time.

The escritoire-bookcase (Fig. 78) exhibits that fine blending of beauty with utility so prevalent in the Heppelwhite period

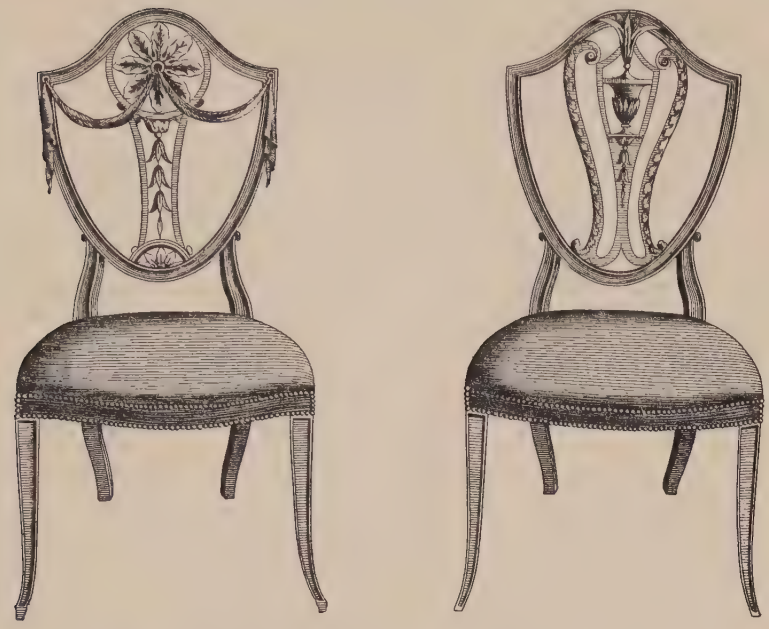

Fig. 74. Two single chairs from Heppelwhite's "Guide."

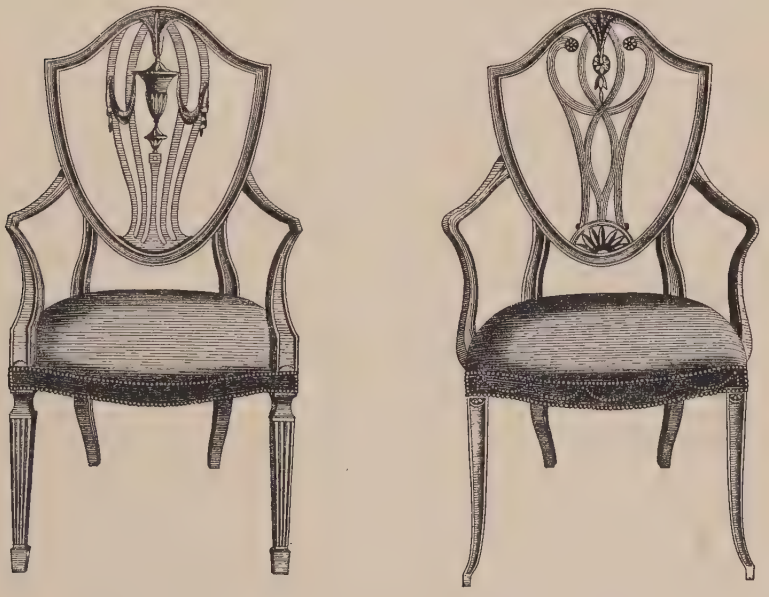

Fig. 75. Two arm chairs from Heppelwhite's "Guide."

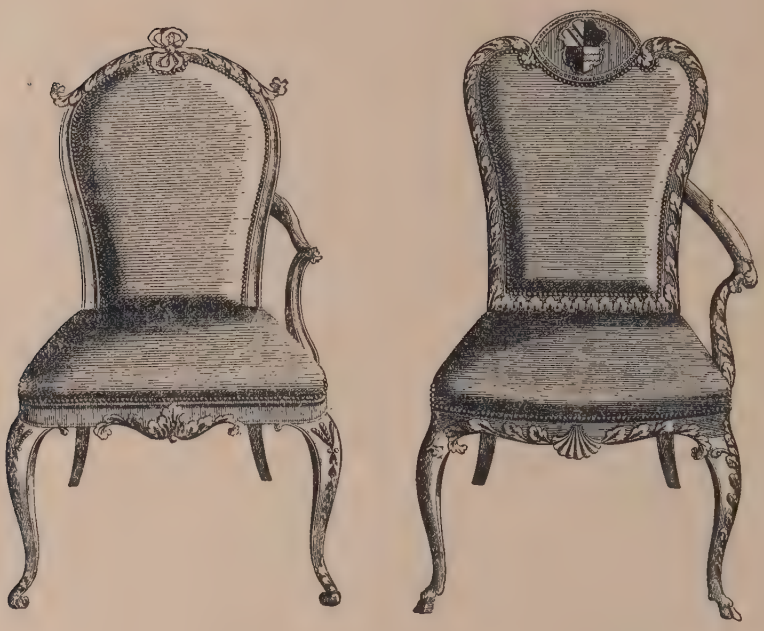

Fig. 76. Two State Chairs from Heppelwhite's "Guide," showing single and armed effects.

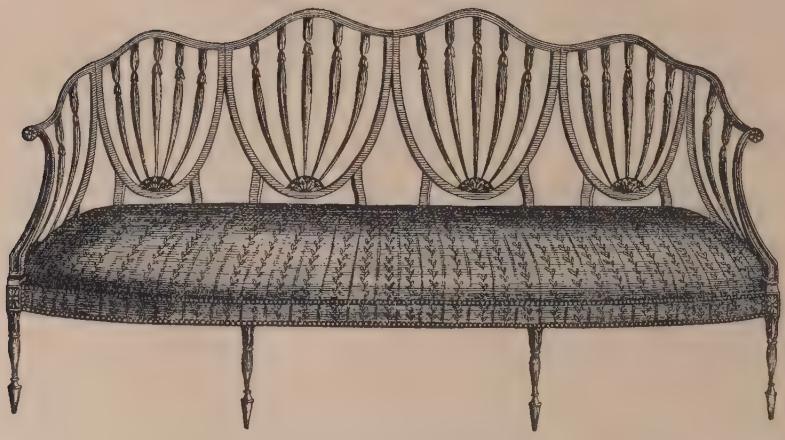

Fig. 77. Bar back sofa from Heppelwhite's "Guide."

Fig. 78. A Heppelwhite mahogany escritoire-bookcase or cabinet (about 1770-80).

Fig. 79. A Heppelwhite writing desk with pull-out slide and tambour top. *Circ.* 1770-80.

before the commencement of the real decadence in English furniture. For surface beauty it relies upon choice of finely figured mahogany. Any inlay would have been superfluous. The writing-desk section with nests of drawers and stationery cases is of the pull-out variety and, when closed, its lateral panel, also finely figured, happily balances the upper cabinet and lower cupboard. The upper section can be used for the display of china or as a bookcase at will. The Gothic tracery in the glazed doors is of the simplest. Shearer's "Book of Prices" gives a more elaborate version of this tracery under date 1788. The splayed feet and shaped apron skirting are typically Heppelwhite.

Fig. 79, a writing-desk pure and simple, exemplifies the mechanical contrivances which were rapidly coming into favour. The desk is shown open, but the revolving shutter or "tambour" is clearly seen. The bed of the desk pulls out to afford extra writing space if required. In many of the smaller desks of the period the action of pulling out or closing back the writing-slide opens or closes the tambour top.

The small collector may find his earthly paradise in the collection of Heppelwhite period furniture. There are so many things to look for apart from chairs, tables, sideboards, bookcases, dressing-chests and tall-boys. Given sufficient space, the heavier pieces are as useful as modern productions, and often infinitely cheaper to buy, whilst smaller pieces which may have outgrown their original uses are welcome as decorative objects. In the majority of pieces there is happy blending of fine colour-tone, simple outline, cunning design and consummate workmanship. Dainty little enclosed dressing-tables with adjustable mirrors, pincushions, boxes and compartments for articles of toilet and "make-up" are delightful; small portable table-desks and others on slender stands, which are mere toys from the modern standpoint, often contain enough spring contrivances and secret recesses to keep one busy for an hour. Basin-stands, either corner-shaped or square, made for "imperfect ablutioners," are to-day scarcely out of place as drawing-room ornaments.

Two illustrations of toilet-mirrors of the period are given in Figs. 80 and 81. The one is noticeable for its elaborate cresting and reeded-turnery posts and cross-rail; the other is of simple type—and true to type. It might pass as Sheraton, but the writers prefer Heppelwhite as an ascription. The oval glass and curved supports are exactly as shown in the "Guide," where

the swing glass is supported on a serpentine-fronted stand instead of a half-circular one as in this illustration. A design book naturally shows the elaborate form, whilst the carrying out by the artificer is quite another matter. Either form would fall easily within the compass of his skill. This stand was undoubtedly intended as a fitting companion to a bow-fronted dressing-chest.

History was repeating itself in regard to furniture design in 1788. Many Chippendale designs of 1754, if actually within the range of workshop politics, as the great Thomas Chippendale asserted, were apparently too expensive or too elaborate to attract the average buyer. Any piece of Heppelwhite furniture which attains to the qualities shown in the Heppelwhite book naturally possesses an appreciating value. The simple unrecorded pieces are to-day well within the range of the small collector, who will find on the whole that such survivals quite fulfil the laudable aspirations of A. Heppelwhite & Co. "to unite elegance and utility, and blend the useful with the agreeable."

In the Woodwork Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum there hangs a recently acquired portrait of a member of the Seddon family. The authorities suggest, tentatively, that it represents George Seddon, the founder of an important firm of eighteenth-century furniture makers.

Briefly, the history of the Seddon firm, as given in the "Dictionary of English Furniture," is as follows:—George Seddon came from Lancashire and first appears in the "London Directory," under date 1768, as a cabinet-maker and upholsterer, at 158, Aldersgate Street (that was eleven years before the death of Thomas Chippendale). A contemporary press notice called attention to a fire at Seddon's premises wherein he is described as "one of the most eminent of cabinet-makers of London," and the damage was computed at £20,000. George Seddon died in 1777 and his sons, presumably his partners, moved to 150, Aldersgate Street. In 1791 the firm became Seddon, Sons & Shackleton—Seddon was a cabinet-maker and Shackleton was an upholsterer—and an inventory of the stock in that year shows a value of £120,000. It is also stated that in 1791 one Thomas Seddon, probably a son of George Seddon, started an independent business at 24, Dover Street, Piccadilly, under the name of Morel & Seddon, and that the Windsor Castle accounts show

Fig. 80. A Heppelwhite toilet mirror with crown and crested top.

Fig. 81. A simple mahogany and inlaid toilet mirror of type shown in Hepplewhite's "Guide."

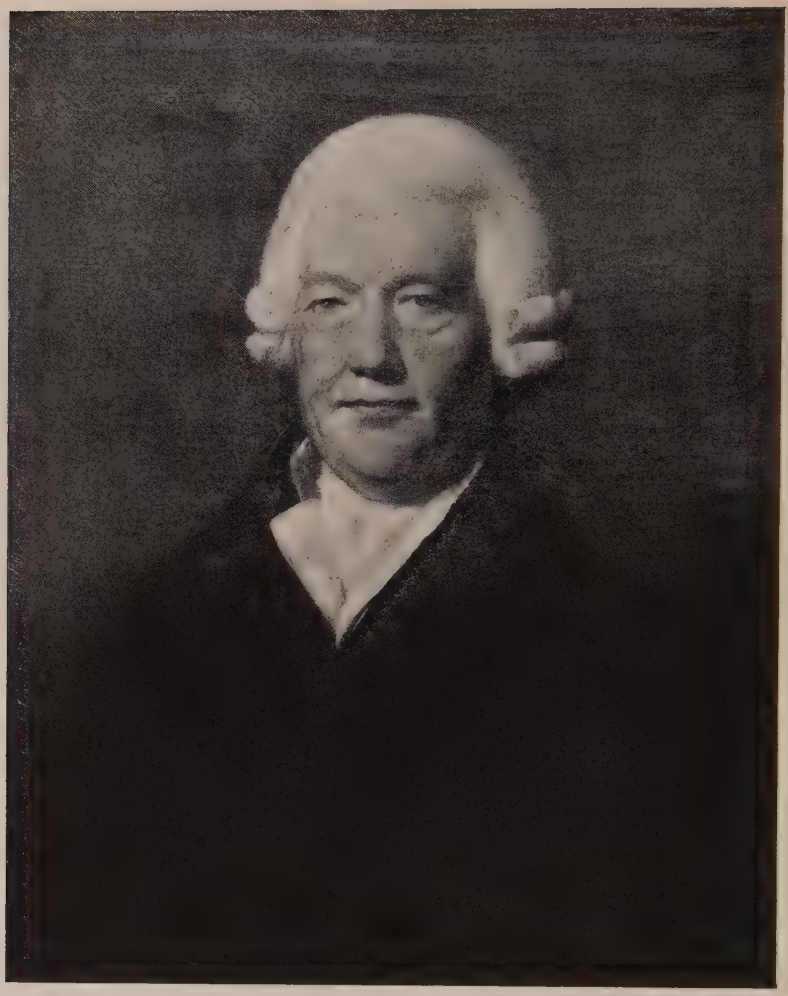

Fig. 82. A portrait of George Seddon.

large quantities of furniture supplied by that firm during the early part of the nineteenth century.

The reference to the Seddon conflagration reminds us that Chippendale also had a fire in Saint Martin's Lane in 1755. The estimate of the Aldersgate Street fire in 1768, and the handsome figure of the stock valuation in 1791, both suggest that the Seddon family must have figured largely as furniture producers during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. George Seddon, well established in business in 1768, and dying in 1777, was collaterally of the Chippendale school. The writers of these notes are well aware that a great number of pieces of furniture can be traced to the Seddon firm or firms. An unearthed trade catalogue, issued under the name of Seddon, would be inestimable as treasure trove in furniture lore.

So far as we know, no portrait of Chippendale, Ince, Mayhew, Hepplewhite or Sheraton has ever transpired, and if the name of Seddon has, temporarily, disappeared as a term in furniture nomenclature, we are fortunate in being able, for the first time, to reproduce (Fig. 82) a portrait of a member, and quite possibly, the founder, of a firm which in all probability issued more furniture to appreciative eighteenth century buyers than did any one of the aforementioned men of admitted fame. This Seddon portrait was presented to the Museum by Mrs. William de H. Birch, and the Woodwork Section have been kind enough to photograph the painting for the purposes of this volume.

CHAPTER V

SHERATON AND THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DESIGNERS

THE Sheraton Period as a term in furniture chronology has, to the confusion of serious students, been used much too loosely in the past. Many things which have been called "Sheraton" were palpably made before the man of that name and fame could reasonably have been capable of either making or even influencing them.

When we arrive at greater precision in furniture terms, "The Sheraton Period" will stand to mean, narrowly, those few years between the date of Sheraton's arrival in London (1790) and the publication of his "Drawing Book" (1791–1794), and his "Encyclopædia" (1804–1807); or, widely, with the addition of a few years on either side, about 1785 to 1810. Those twenty-five years, for all practical purposes, cover the period of the furniture recorded in his "Drawing Book" and the period during which such furniture was in the prevailing mode.

The first of the illustration to this chapter (Fig. 83) shows a serpentine-fronted side-table, veneered with mahogany and banded with satinwood, which was made approximately in 1795. Distinctly showing French influence, it is of English make. The serpentine-fronted top and the graceful curves of the lower line flowing into the slender cabrioles exhibit the happiest result from curvilinear construction without any suggestion of busyness or over-elaboration. There is no suggestion offered that Thomas Sheraton made this Sheraton-period table; indeed, it is rather more than likely that any furniture he made in London between the date of his advent and that of his death (in 1806, at the age of 55) was negligible in quantity. Not a single piece of furniture has by documentary evidence been traced to his hands. His

reputation stands, or should stand, on quite other ground, namely that of his published "Drawing Book," which plainly shows the furniture of his time being made by scores of other cabinet-makers—master-craftsmen whose names, although quite ascertainable, rarely get mentioned in books dealing with the period. Sheraton's book was in no sense a master-craftsman's catalogue saying, in effect, "these are the goods I am making"; on the contrary it was professedly a record of desirabilities in furniture from other hands for the guidance of practitioners in town and country, and as such it exerted a wide and telling influence. It is practically certain that he came to London in 1790 with the express purpose of publishing his "Drawing Book" and, subsequently, his "Encyclopædia" (which was left unfinished early in the letter "C"), and his "Cabinet Dictionary." Sheraton's "Dictionary" is a very useful book of reference in matters relating to contemporary methods and materials in furniture construction and finish.

The years of Thomas Sheraton's life (1750 to 1806) more than cover those years of the personal activities of Chippendale and Heppelwhite; but both of the latter were in their graves when Sheraton was compiling his "Drawing Book" and their works were in his, Sheraton's, opinion amongst the "back numbers." He was recording the activities of some of the post-Chippendale craftsmen and saying, in effect, that their productions were the latest and the best.

The little Frenchified table referred to above (Fig. 83) was undoubtedly a desirable thing in its day and it still remains so. A contrast in style is found in Fig. 84, a side-table of about the same date (1795), purely English in conception. The inlay in this instance is almost negligible, consisting of the thinnest of white lines outlining the cross-bandings; but these narrow lines quite sufficiently emphasise the colour scheme in the lustrous matched veneers. The cock beading round the drawer-fronts has never been surpassed as a method of framing drawer-fronts and breaking up plane surfaces in furniture-fronts. This table is in no sense typical of the dining-room sideboards of the period, often erring on the large side, with their commodious cellarettes at either end. This piece was bought by the present owner, after a long hunt involving many selections and rejections, as a quite useful sideboard-table for a late eighteenth century dining-room scheme.

Fig. 85 shows a folding-top card-table with rounded corners, turned and reeded legs and a considerable amount of inlay. This table may well have been made during Sheraton's lifetime in London, say, about 1800. Such card-tables of simple late-Sheraton design are, for unexplained reasons, realising absurdly low prices in to-day's furniture market. Apart from their intended use for card-playing, they are very decorative and may be used at will as side-tables, dressing-tables and even for tea or breakfast purposes.

As recently as in November, 1927, in a Puttick & Simpson sale, an excellent Sheraton period card-table with folding-top, rounded corners, inlaid borders and square tapering legs, realised only 4½ guineas; but this was a quite exceptional bargain in a catalogue of rather miscellaneous items of furniture. In the same catalogue three bow-fronted short chests of drawers, about 36 inches wide, one described as "Georgian" and the other as "Sheraton," realised 9, 8½ and 7½ guineas respectively. They were all in excellent repair and of satisfactory appearance without possessing any outstanding qualities which would render them highly desirable. Such prices would scarcely represent half their replacement value in a modern workshop. In the market's valuation little account was taken of the added charm of age.

Fig. 86 shows a typical bow-fronted short chest of drawers, typical in form but of outstanding qualities. Made about the year 1795, it stands as a sure guide in taste for the collector. The matched curl veneers show plainly that they were all cut from the same mahogany log and the restrained satinwood bands are just sufficient to frame and emphasise nature's wood-pictures. The slide beneath the two short drawers is a useful item in the make-up and the finely moulded top edge is a conspicuous feature.

The original intended use of the next piece illustrated (Fig. 87) is rather uncertain. It was catalogued as a wig-box. Wigs had not entirely gone out of wear in 1795–1800, and doubtless this box would have afforded ample storage space for wigs, with the drawer for curling irons and other tools of the perruquier. On the other hand it may quite reasonably have been intended as a work-box, for it is not of the stability or capacity of a wine-cooler. As a drawing-room ornament of many uses it is impeccable.

Fig. 83. A mahogany veneered side table inlaid with satinwood bands, showing French influence. (*Circ.* 1795.)

Fig. 84. Mahogany veneered side-board table. About 1795.

Fig. 85. Mahogany card-table inlaid with satinwood. About 1800.

In the next illustration (Fig. 88), of the same date, we find a rather unusual dwarf wardrobe—a cupboard with two sham drawers with lion-head handles. The ovals are matched in pairs of dark, bold curl mahogany veneers, whilst the matched mitred surrounds are of lighter tone and straighter grain, affording a quite satisfactory framing for the picture pieces with the satinwood bands as bezels.

In the foregoing six illustrations the suggested dates are closely approximative. In dealing with the five following (Figs. 89 to 93) we are upon absolutely safe ground as to date. These were made for a member of the Cheere family, of Papworth Hall, Cambridgeshire, by the London cabinet-maker, George Oakley, a contemporary of Sheraton, in 1810. Mr. Ingleson C. Goodison, who has lent these five photographs (in addition to Figs. 83, 86, 88) for the purpose of these notes, has had access to the accounts relating to the 1810 pieces.

In this date connection a few historical memoranda are not out of place. Seventeen years earlier (1793) France declared war on England, and in 1800 Malta surrendered to the English Fleet. In the following year the French Army surrendered in Egypt, and two years later war was declared against Buonaparte ; while the Battle of Trafalgar was fought in 1805. Without carrying the chronology through to the Peninsular War, the foregoing data are sufficient to remind us of the Near Eastern influences at work on the furniture made during the war years with France, 1793 to 1815. The public mind was much occupied with Near Eastern occurrences, and what is more natural than that such thoughts found expression in the sphinx-like caryatids and ormolu warlike trophies adorning the neo-classical chairs, tables, bookcases and cabinets of the period? Græco-Romano-Egyptian motifs were lavishly applied to that which we might call the " English Empire " furniture of the declining years of George III. The final edition of Sheraton's " Drawing Book " is loaded with such confections.

The mahogany hall-chair with painted armorial crest, shown in Fig. 89, is distinctly Grecian in type, whilst Figs. 90 and 91, an elbow-chair and a single chair of the dining-room suite, have the same sabre-shaped legs wedded to English turnery arm supports in the case of the elbow-chair. The horizontal back rests are departures from the general perpendicularities of the earlier back slats and, for about the first time, we find the back

rest is no longer mortised into the framing, but is superposed upon and overlapping the uprights. Undoubtedly this heaviness is a retrogression in grace from the Chippendale and Heppelwhite conventions. Later on, about 1824, we find these broad cross-pieces forming the top-rails, sometimes mortised between, but more often laid across and overlapping the uprights.

Sets of such chairs, despised a few years ago as being merely "old-fashioned," are now gaining in favour as "antiques" exhibiting, more particularly in the earlier phases, data of the Napoleonic Wars. Fifteen years ago short sets of simple mahogany chairs of George IV's reign were purchasable at from £12 to £14 per set. Such sets, almost invariably built of hard, close-grained, dark mahogany, with pleasing details in back slats and turned legs, have risen in value to something approaching £30 to £40, and may be expected to have a still appreciating value as, being more than a hundred years old, they escape the United States import duty.

It is no great step in chair evolution from the late Georgian chairs of 1824 to the early and mid-Victorians of 1840 to 1860, which have little to recommend them apart from their excellent workmanship, fine material and great solidity.

Fig. 92, again of the 1810 series, shows a dressing-table and swing toilet-mirror. The table is built on rigid lines just relieved from monotony by the central arching repeated at the back, and the shaped front line of the under tray-shelf. The shimmering mahogany veneers of the drawer-fronts are outlined with ebony inlays.

Fig. 93 shows a winged library-bookcase of architectural design made in 1810. The mahogany veneers are sparingly inlaid with ebony dots and vertical bands of palm leaf ornament. The side wings, protected by brass wire-lattice worked doors, were presumably for the storage of choice volumes not in daily use and kept under lock and key. Such lattices, in place of glass, were distinctive adornments of the finer cabinets and bookcases of the period.

"Time alters fashions and frequently obliterates works of art and ingenuity: but that which is founded on Geometry and Science will remain unalterable." Thomas Sheraton appended this legend to the engraved frontispiece of his "Drawing Book," which shows a classic interior with art professors in the characters of Geometry, Perspective, Drawing and Architecture with an

Fig. 86. Mahogany bow-fronted chest of drawers, with satinwood bands. About 1795.

Fig. 87. Inlaid mahogany wig box or wine bin. About 1795.

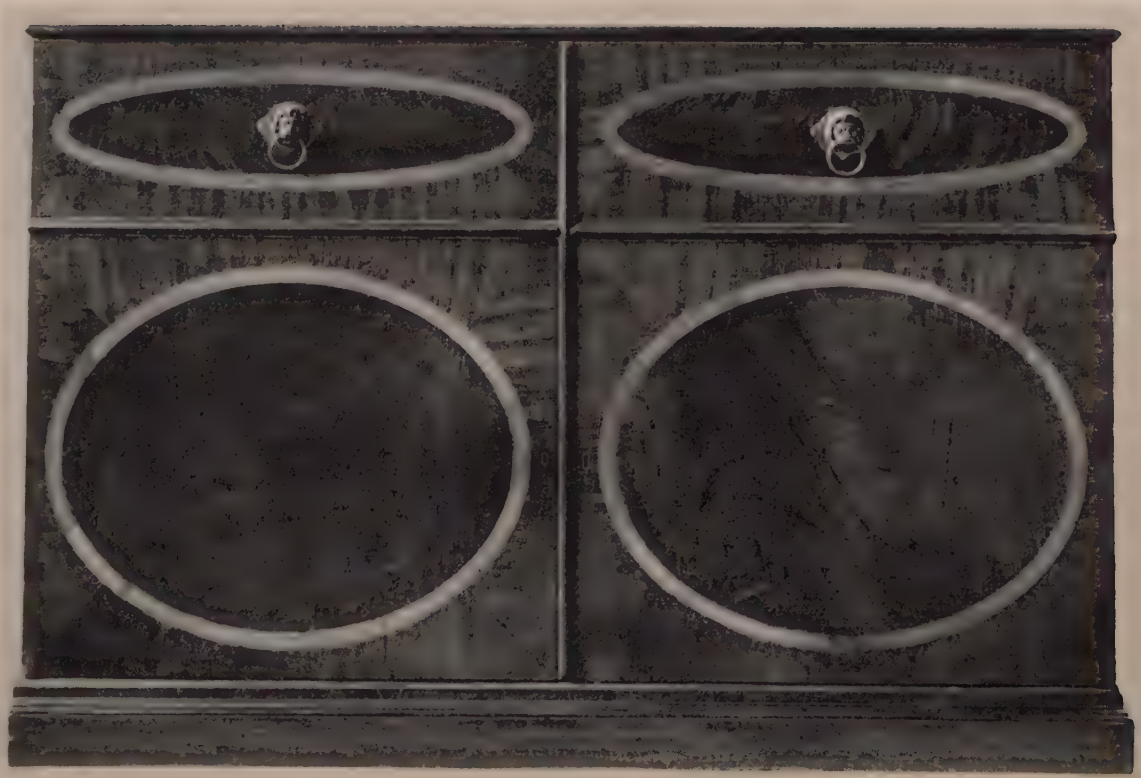

Fig. 88. A mahogany dwarf wardrobe with figured veneers and satinwood bands (about 1795).

Fig. 89. Mahogany hall chair with painted crest. Grecian type. Made in 1810.

Fig. 90. Dining room armchair with sabre-shaped legs and super-posed back-rest. Made in 1810.

Fig. 91. Single chair, companion to that shown in Fig. 90.

Fig. 92. A mahogany dressing-table, the veneered drawer fronts inlaid with ebony lines. Made in 1810. The toilet mirror is of the same period.

Fig. 93. A winged library bookcase of mahogany, inlaid with ebony dots and palm leaf ornament. Made in 1810.

Fig. 94. A secretaire-bookcase in satinwood, inlaid with natural and stained woods.

attendant Cupid. Even if his dictum would have been more suitable in a dissertation on the Great Pyramid, it reads as good sound doctrine if not too closely analysed; but it is little more than a literary pose without which a book dealing with Arts and Crafts would have been considered incomplete in those days of classic revivals in architecture. One has, perhaps reluctantly, to come to the conclusion that the furniture of the period, in its greater bulk, had as little relation to geometry as it had to Tenterden steeple. If this is true of the bulk we must not forget that, individually, architectural cornices on tall-boys, wardrobes, cabinets and bookcases relied considerably upon geometry for their true proportions.

Sir Claude Phillips bequeathed a priceless Sheraton period secretaire-bookcase to the nation. Its qualities are so self-evident that there is no occasion to enlarge upon them here and an illustration of it (Fig. 94) is placed among the others accompanying these notes merely for the purpose of exemplifying the highest ideals of some super-designer at the latter end of the eighteenth century. With all its magnificence it possesses the great merit of restraint in the surface decoration of its lustrous satinwood. At first sight the shell-ornament, flower-swags and classic urns have the appearance of brush-work, but are found to consist of delicate inlays of light toned natural and stained woods. If this creation is beyond the dreams of the small collector, he can at least hope to find some of its elements in purchases within reach.

To come down to the simpler forms in the furniture of the satinwood period (which at the same time did not cease to be the period of mahogany and other delectable foreign-grown woods), Fig. 95 shows a writing-table, with desk to match, in harewood (sycamore). If not in material it is in form something that the modest collector may aspire to in simple mahogany or in mahogany inlaid with satinwood.

Fig. 96 shows a collector's bargain, a Sheraton period mahogany dressing-table with the usual folding top enclosing a number of compartments for toilet requisites. It has one long drawer, oak-lined, and over that a sham drawer-front. This piece was catalogued a few months ago as a Chippendale writing-desk; but there is nothing in its build or decoration to suggest such an early date ascription or exclusive use. It certainly contains a pen-tray and two ink-wells which is often the case in

such tables; but it is much too tall for use as a writing-desk. It is quite useful to-day as a china or silver table and stationery cabinet. At the time of purchase its surface condition was deplorable; but it was a labour of love, involving considerable time and ingenuity, to denude it of several coats of modern polish and grime to arrive at long last at the original and almost unimpaired wax and oil polish. A very sparing application of pure linseed oil and a vigorous rubbing, when dry, with a clean polishing cloth soon put life into the dark mahogany grain.

As an introductory study of the furniture of the Sheraton period "The Cabinet-makers' London Book of Prices" stands pre-eminent. It first appeared in 1788, and was followed by a second edition "with additions" in 1793. The first edition anticipated Sheraton's "Drawing Book" by three years and coincided exactly with the Heppelwhite "Guide." The "Book of Prices" was in no sense a trade catalogue addressed to prospective furniture buyers, but was printed for the London Society of Cabinet-makers, and of that society both Heppelwhite and Thomas Shearer were members. Although Shearer's name is not appended as author, the book has been accepted by posterity as his production. Of the twenty-nine plates eighteen are signed "T. Shearer" and three others are signed simply "Heppelwhite." A search amongst the "London Directories" for the years 1780 to 1790 in an attempt to find the name of Shearer has proved abortive, but other investigators may be more fortunate. Thomas Sheraton palpably had no hand in the compilation of the "Book of Prices." He did not migrate to London till 1790, and later on he somewhat grudgingly praised it in his own book. Had he had any hand in the compilation he would no doubt have proclaimed the fact.

To the modern student in furniture lore the "Book of Prices" is an infallible guide to much of the furniture in vogue in the years 1788 and 1793. It was a costing book of piece-work wages for the guidance of master cabinet-makers and, as such, affords an interesting study in late eighteenth century workshop economies. Although no descriptive text is appended to the twenty-nine plates, the costings throw many sidelights on methods and materials. Shearer's usual method of workshop costing was to state the piece-work wages for the simplest form and then add prices for extra fitments, embellishments and various methods of polishing. In this manner we can arrive at a cost

Fig. 95. Writing-table and desk in hare-wood (sycamore), inlaid.

Fig. 96. Mahogany dressing-table with folding top enclosing compartments for toilet requisites (late eighteenth century). Khang Hi ginger jar and bowl.

Fig. 97. A mahogany corner washstand (with Ming bowl), and square basin stand (with contemporary Staffordshire jug and basin). Late eighteenth century.

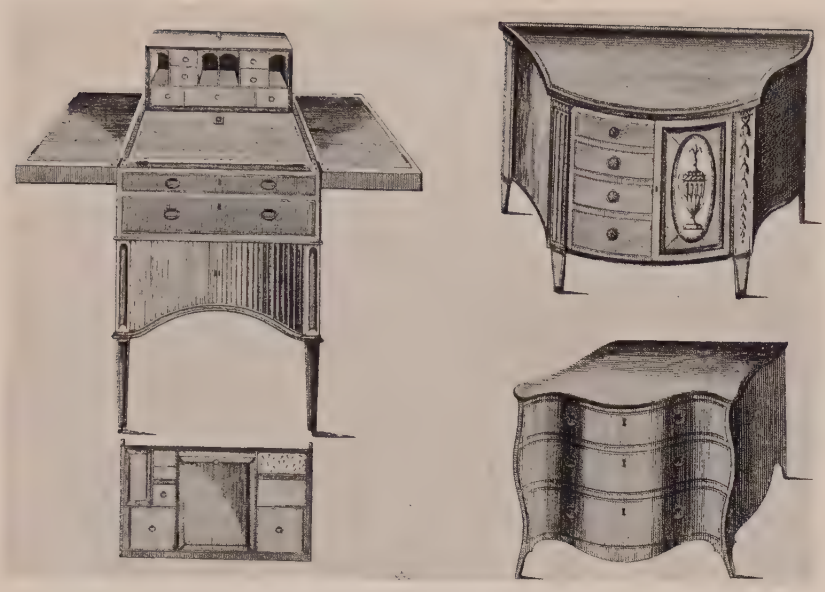

Fig. 98. Harlequin table, commode and chest of drawers from Shearer's "Book of Prices."

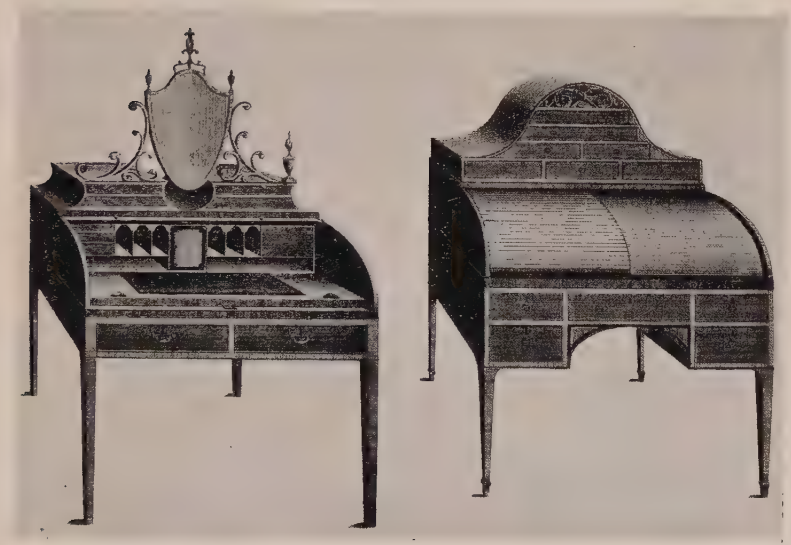

Fig. 99. Writing-tables from Shearer's "Book of Prices."

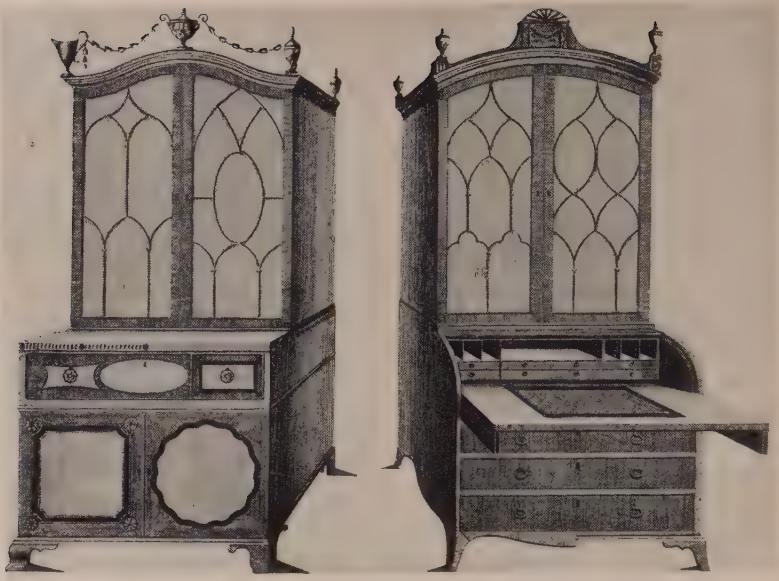

Fig. 100. Escritoire bookcases from Shearer's " Book of Prices."

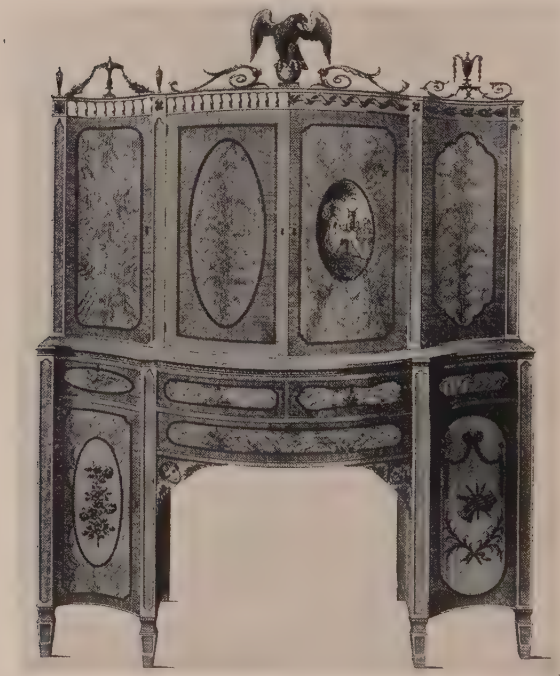

Fig. 101. Elaborate cabinet from Shearer's " Book of Prices." The plate is signed by Heppelwhite.

of fourteen shillings, all told, for making the mahogany corner washstand shown in Fig. 97. Such a piece to-day, as an antique, has a value at auction of about 5 guineas, or at a guess, probably not more than twice its original market value after allowing for wages, material and maker's profit.

The small square mahogany basin-stand shown on the same plate is of the simplest kind made in the Sheraton period. It is shown with a contemporary Staffordshire-ware jug and basin. With a panel of mahogany to cover the basin hole it would make the daintiest of tables for many obvious uses.

Sheraton's book shows an elaborate variant of the simple corner washstand having a small water cistern with metal tap and a plugged basin. The upper half is enclosed by a tambour shutter and the lower half by two doors nicely inlaid.

On December 8th, 1927, Messrs. Christie issued an illustrated catalogue of furniture and objects of art from various named and unnamed sources. Amongst them were a few notable pieces of the period under review. We can pass over the fine Sheraton cabinet which sold for 850 guineas and a marqueterie commode for 780 guineas as being outside the scope of this book. Something near to the purpose was seen in "A Sheraton mahogany toilet-table, with folding top enclosing a mirror and divisions, drawers below, and a cupboard enclosed by tambour panes banded with tulipwood and satinwood—3 feet wide," which realised 90 guineas. This piece with its quiet colour tones, simple outline and elaborate interior economy reflects the very best taste of its period, and for its record we instinctively look to the design books of Shearer and Sheraton.

More interesting still was an item in the same sale, catalogued as "A mahogany writing-cabinet, by Thomas Shearer, with folding-top enclosing a writing-slide, rising pigeon-holes and folding stationery cases, with a drawer enclosing a mirror and divisions, and tambour panel below—25½ inches wide." An appended note states that it is the design illustrated in "The Cabinet-makers' London Book of Prices," 1793, plate 10. It is interesting to find it illustrated twice in Shearer's book—plates 10 and 19—with the small difference that by Shearer's plate-scale it works out to 27 inches in width. It is obviously a combined writing and toilet-table with a conveniently recessed cupboard below. When the folding-top is opened out and the hinged "sham drawer-front" is pulled forward the leather-

covered writing-bed mechanically rises to a convenient slope. On releasing a bolt at the back, a nest of pigeon-holes and small drawers rises to view by means of a smoothly working weight balance. This piece, which realised 150 guineas, exhibits the quintessence of the *multum in parvo* furniture of the true Sheraton period with the associated name of Thomas Shearer. The dressing-table referred to above and shown in Fig. 96 is but its humble relation and, as such, is a piece for the small collector.

Fig. 98 shows Shearer's dressing-table photographed from plate 10 (dated 1788) of the "Book of Prices" referred to above. Shearer calls it a "Harlequin Table"—a title perhaps suggested by the mysterious manner in which the stationery cases rise from behind, reminiscent of the sudden appearance of Harlequin on the Christmas pantomime stage or, perhaps, as a mere suggestion of its several uses. Shearer gives the piece-work wages for making this at £3 6s. or, with extras, £1 more. On the same plate are shown a commode and a serpentine chest of drawers. If these two drawings are not indeed counsels of perfection in regard to perspective they indicate the trend of the ornate surface treatment of furniture at the hands of the Shearer-Sheraton schools. Although Shearer signs the majority of the plates in his book we need not take it for granted that he was essentially a furniture designer, but rather that he was a recorder of the furniture of the period.

Fig. 99 shows two writing-tables from the "Book of Prices" (signed by Shearer), both with tambour tops. The example shown as closed gives alternative ideas, fine and coarse, for the tambour shutter. The open desk (left) is furnished with a mirror, a useful help to the fair writer at a knotty point in her correspondence; it is something to see one's own face when writing a love letter. This plate also indicates small alternative details in applied decoration.

Fig. 100, signed by Shearer, shows two fine escritoire-book-cases with suggestions for various treatments in decoration and glazing. Four different styles of foot brackets are shown.

Fig. 101 is an interesting item from the "Book of Prices," signed by Heppelwhite (1782) or perhaps by a member of that firm after Heppelwhite's death. Here again we find a number of different suggestions for inlaying and surface painting. Any such elaborate piece suggested by this Shearer-Heppelwhite plate would pass unchallenged as "Sheraton" in the modern

Fig. 102. An inlaid and painted satinwood chair. (*Circ.* 1800.)

Fig. 103. Armchair of painted beech-wood with Prince of Wales' feathers decoration.

Fig. 104. Chair of painted wood with cane seat and early type of stretchers.

Fig. 105. Armchair of painted beech-wood with cane seat. About 1800.

auction room. Incidentally the piece-work wages for such a cabinet (4 feet long, 5 feet high) amounted to £4 16s. or with a few extras about £5 5s. We may take it that the surface painting would not fall within any such calculation. The handiwork of a consummate artist such as Angelica Kauffmann would be outside the trade union rates as laid down by "The Cabinetmakers' London Book of Prices."

The engraved frontispiece to the "Book of Prices" shows a classical lady holding the Roman fasces in one hand and an open book in the other. She is attended by an engaging little cupid carrying a set-square and compasses and a scroll on which is inscribed "Unanimity with Justice."

The chairs of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may be divided into three main phases: (*a*) in the exclusive use of mahogany, where the wood, with its delicate handworked, moulded, carved and turned details, is everything; (*b*) in the use of home-grown woods, mainly beech, with surface paintings, alongside with imported satinwood delicately caned or upholstered with silken stuffs and needlework; and (*c*) at the turn of the century ("Late Sheraton"), in a reversion to mahogany treated with Near Eastern *motifs* suggested by the Napoleonic wars or details of neo-classical architecture.

The satinwood chair shown in Fig. 102 is in no sense typical of the 1800 period, but may be taken as an interesting exotic with all its tall curved back and extra broad headpiece and upright. The satinwood is inlaid with darker woods and a foliated outline of brass wire.

The three chairs shown in Figs. 103 to 105 are useful as exhibiting the painted beechwood phase. The museum authorities assign to all three a date of about 1800 and they are quite typical of the painted furniture of the period. The wood is of no account in decorative aims; the paint is everything. Figs. 103 and 104 show clearly, in their shield-shaped backs, that the Sheraton period had not entirely discarded the Heppelwhite conventions. It is quite possible that the painted chair with the Prince of Wales's feathers was such a one as Sheraton saw when he "had but a transient view" of the inside of Carlton House.

At the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a whole suite of painted furniture, bedstead included, which belonged to David Garrick. Such painted furniture is by no means rare, but, un-

fortunately, the painted decoration is generally much the worse for wear.

Mahogany is amongst the most durable of woods and its colour tone improves with age. It is no uncommon thing to find late eighteenth century mahogany dining-chairs in practically as good condition as when they left their makers' hands. Simple types in endless variety must have been made in countless thousands and scarcely a week passes but the London auction rooms render up a long or short set. Whilst such things are rarely "thrown away," they may often be bought at little more than the cost of a modern set. Single specimens realise proportionately small prices as against complete sets. Whilst a solitary chair, of excellent design, might be acquired for about £5, a short set of seven might fetch £50 or £60, and a long set of twelve or fourteen appreciably more in proportion.

General taste runs in the direction of uniformity in chairs for the dining-room; but in a sitting-room a harlequin assemblage of occasional chairs is as natural as a diversity in pictures, china and bric-a-brac. The four mahogany chairs shown in Figs. 106 to 109 were all pre-war bargains and a recital of their respective costs would be misleading to the collector. The small single chair (Fig. 107) with the X-shaped back-rails is delicately reeded and has a rather unusual top-rail carved with a palm-leaf ornament on which is imposed an oblong panel containing an architectural drapery ornament. The stuffed seat was re-covered sixteen years ago with horse-hair, a green stripe on a white ground (a hint from Heppelwhite's "Guide"), and is none the worse for wear to-day. This chair may be accepted as belonging approximately to 1800. The stretchered chair (Fig. 106), with square legs, let-in seat and perpendicular back-rails with palm-leaf tops, is about twenty years older—approximating to 1780.

The two remaining chairs illustrated (Figs. 108 and 109), both of dark, close-grained mahogany with fine turnery and reeded details, are palpably of one family and date—about 1800. The arm-chair with diamond lattice work is a particularly pleasing model. A set of four arm-chairs of this pattern realised £52 at a West End auction in or about the year 1922. The writer has never seen armless chairs to match this model, but doubtless they exist somewhere and, perhaps, also the concomitant settee, which would be a sheer joy.

Fig. 110 gives a portrait of Robert Adam, who was born at

Figs. 106, 107. Mahogany chairs of simple type, (*left*) about 1780, (*right*) about 1800.

Figs. 108, 109. (*left*) Mahogany chair of simple type, with latticed back and fine turnery details, and (*right*) mahogany chair with fluting and reeding. Both about 1800.

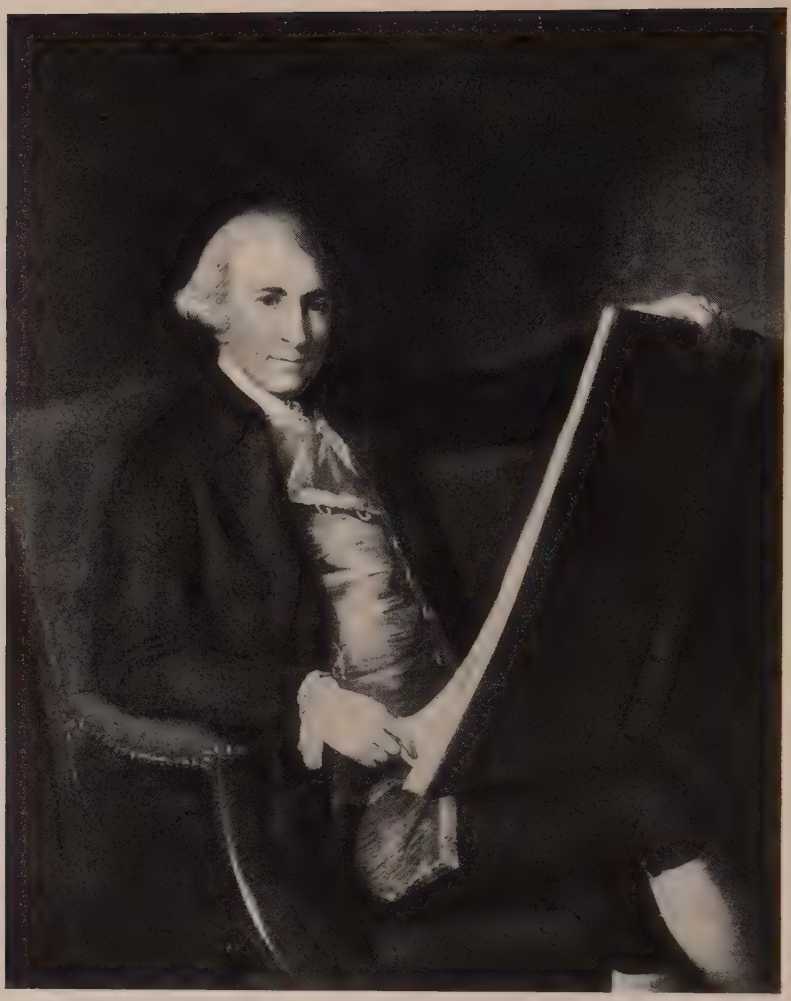

Fig. 110. A portrait by Robert Adam, attributed to Zoffany.
In the possession of B. T. Batsford, Ltd.

Kirkcaldy, Fifeshire, in 1728, and died in London in 1792. The two brothers, Robert and James Adam of Adelphi fame, probably left their mark upon London and the provinces more indelibly than did any single architect since the reign of the great Master-Mason Wren. Robert was the leading spirit in the movement; his brother James scarcely counts. There are streets upon streets in London alone where the observant pedestrian can point to Adam architectural details by the thousand. To walk round the Adelphi Terrace and the adjacent streets just off London's Strand is to acquire a liberal education in the Adam cult.

Fig. 111. "A Card Party," drawn and engraved by Henry Moses, 1823.

To those who are conversant with the refinements of Adam architecture, the "Adam furniture" is as an open book with its delicate details of acanthus leaf, honeysuckle, husk-stringings, flutings, draperies and carved pateræ. The designs published by Heppelwhite, Shearer and Sheraton in scores of examples show the Adam influence; but as to whether that influence was always direct or merely transmitted is, in the main, mere matter for conjecture. Scarcely a tithe of the late eighteenth century furniture "in the Adam style" could have been designed by Robert Adam, but the influence was so compelling that practically every furniture maker of the period was working to some extent in the Adam style, until in the early years of the nineteenth century Adam furniture, in the hands of the lesser lights, degenerated into unmeaningness. In its purity the Adam cult,

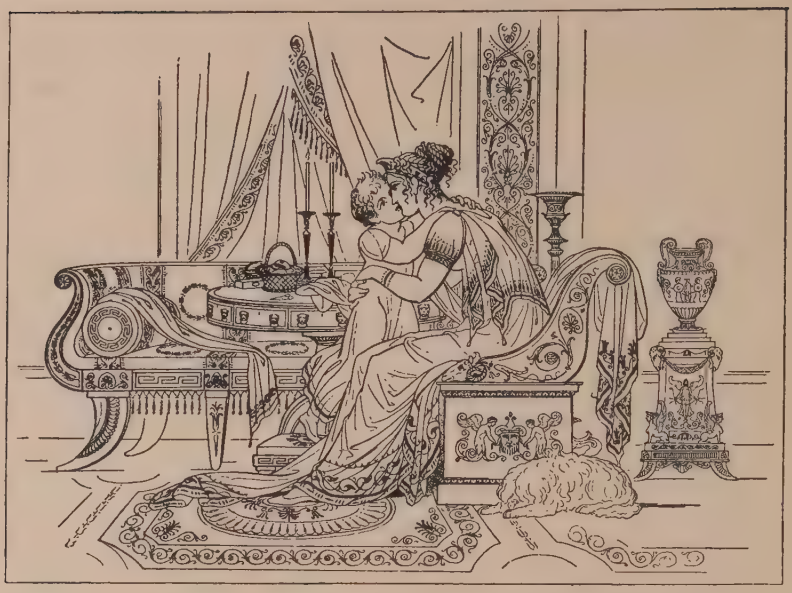

Fig. 112. "A Boudoir Scene," drawn and engraved by Henry Moses, 1823.

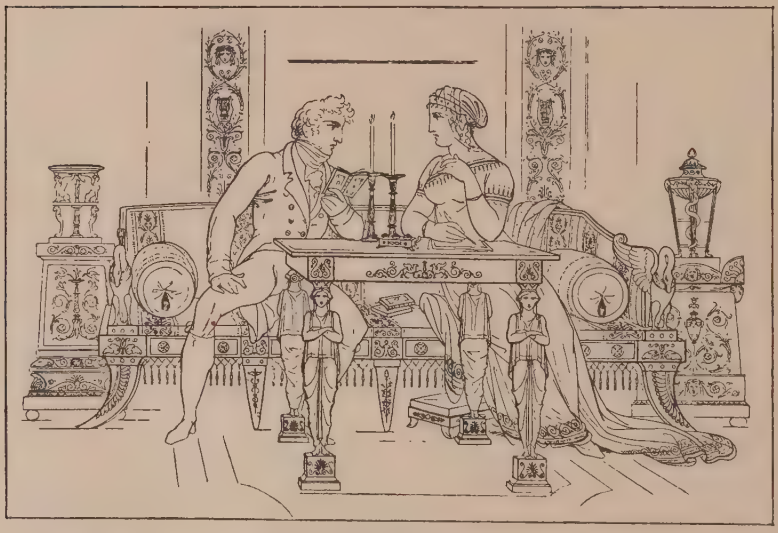

Fig. 113. "The Poet," drawn and engraved by Henry Moses, 1823.

commencing soon after Robert Adam's return from Italy in 1758, was a complete revulsion from the rococo productions of the William Kent school in and about the year 1720 to 1750.

In 1823 E. and C. M'Lean, of Regent Street, Pall Mall, published a book of twenty-nine plates of " Modern Costume," drawn and engraved by Henry Moses. The book shows in various aspects " Le Beau Monde " of King George IV's reign. The pictures selected and shown as line blocks in the text (Fig. 111 to 114) illustrate some of the furniture as Henry Moses saw it fresh from the hands of the early post-Sheraton designers.

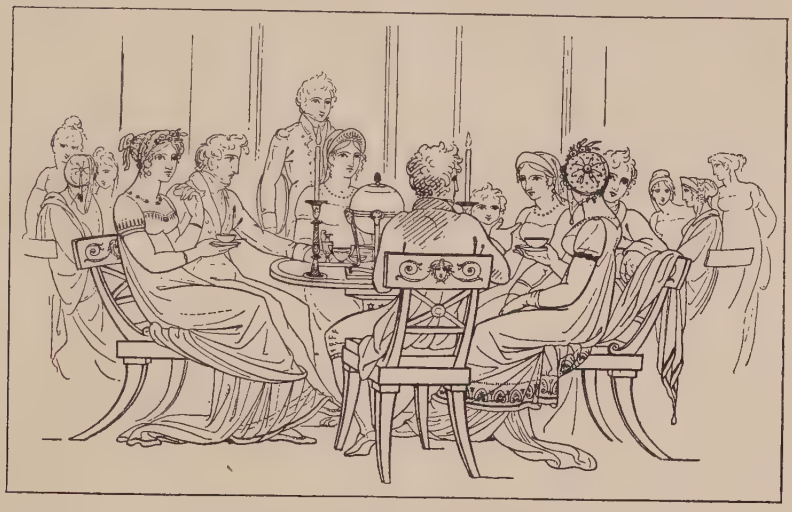

Fig. 114. " A Dinner Party," drawn and engraved by Henry Moses, 1823.

Indeed all the furniture drawn by Henry Moses will be found foreshadowed, if not entirely realised, in Sheraton's own latest publications (1804 to 1807). The chairs, tables and sofas shown by Moses are reminiscent of the furniture of Roman form as given by Thomas Hope in his design book of 1807. It was an age of classic revivals in which Thomas Hope claimed that the French Revolution or its aftermath had restored to France the pure taste for the antique styles of Greece. Quite naturally the English designers followed suit in the " English Empire " furniture.

Collectors of engravings will readily recognise Henry Moses' graceful ladies and children with their flowing classic costumes as the blood relations of those which appear in Adam Buck's much prized tinted engravings.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY VICTORIAN FURNISHING

RATHER late in the day we are beginning to rediscover the nineteenth century. It is found to be a queer, cruel, comical and rather incomprehensible period full of events and spectacles and situations all very remote and removed from our time and way of thinking. As regards the first half, at least, it is as detached from the modern spirit as the Age of Augustine or the Song of Solomon. Whether the early Victorian period be regarded from the angle of fashion or art or social humanity we come upon customs and affairs and tastes unintelligible to our modern understanding. In the beginning of the century it was the sense of humanity which was at its lowest and in the middle of the century it was taste in art. And yet the people were for the most part our grandparents. What brought about the decline of taste which revealed itself in the art and architecture of the mid-nineteenth century remains a matter of conjecture. The usual explanation of the advent of machinery and the enrichment of certain classes is all very well, except that in other countries the wealthy classes, as in Italy, were not the defilers but the patrons and inspirers of the arts.

Victorian conditions were very different from our own.

Fig. 115. Princess (afterwards Queen) Victoria, at the age of four. From the painting by S. P. Denning in the Dulwich Gallery, London.

Fig. 116. Flowers in shell-work.

To our modern ideas, for example, the sanitary conditions of London during the first half of the nineteenth century were unspeakable. The evidence given by Lord Shaftesbury before the Housing of the Working Classes Royal Commission in 1884 indicated the appalling state of many houses under the cesspool system. The death rate in certain districts was 55 per 1,000, nearly four times the highest mortality of London at the present time—the Borough of Finsbury—15·1.

According to the London County Council Reports, it was not until 1847 that it was made compulsory to drain houses into sewers, and it was not until 1850, when main drainage was introduced, that the London cesspools (about 200,000 in number, many of which were under the houses) were at last practically abolished. Even the water closet was not invented until about 1815.

The bathroom in England is of course even later than main drainage, and is a development of the modern house. It belongs to the last half of the nineteenth century. Before this, even in the great houses, hot water for baths had to be carried from room to room. Soames Forsyte in "Swan Song," by Galsworthy, says "He couldn't quite remember pre-bathroom days; but he could well remember how his father used to say regularly: 'They never gave me a bath when I was a boy. First house of my own, I had one put in—people used to come and stare at it—in 1840.'"

Early Victorian furniture is in fact a good deal earlier than Victoria. Even the taste in shell work and wax models seems to have its genesis in the eighteenth century. In a letter of George III we find a reference to the laws and regulations of the Royal Academy drawn up in 1772, enacting that "No needlework, artificial flowers, cut paper, shell work or models in coloured wax, or any such performances shall be admitted to the Exhibition." Evidently the eighteenth century was not going to put up with the idiosyncracies of the nineteenth. A fine example of Victorian shell work (Fig. 116) is to be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, presented by H.M. The Queen.

But in the early Victorian times if they had no bathrooms there were other amenities. At least they had no income-tax (income-tax was introduced in 1842, when it was 7d. in the £) and oysters were cheap—as late as the Great Exhibition of 1851 the best natives were only 7d. per dozen—and people were

allowed to eat chicken with their fingers. On the other hand, there were no anæsthetics (chloroform was not introduced until 1847) and penal codes and practices were appalling. In the beginning of the century, according to Besant, the law recognised 223 capital offences. Public executions continued until 1868, and until 1836 a man accused of felony was not permitted a counsel. Children were freely sent to prison, and a prison governor mentions that some of the convicts were so young that they had to be dressed in prison.

Mrs. C. S. Peel in her book "A Hundred Wonderful Years," writing of 1839 to 1841, sums up the situation :—

"Those were the days when pauper children were carted from the country to become slaves in factories, when babes of four or five acted as 'fanners' in the coal mines, working in lonely darkness for 16 or 17 hours at a stretch. Children were brought to work in the mines on their father's backs, and were put to bed immediately they returned. Children were used to sweep the chimneys, their elbows and knees worn and raw with climbing, terrified, beaten until they faced their task, knowing as they did that death by suffocation or by burning might await them."

But the too generous condemnation of the Victorian period, as a very fertile meadow of depraved taste, has brought its own condemnation. As a consequence, there has been, in a mild measure, a Victorian revival ; and people are resurrecting their grandmothers' possessions and searching for beauty even to the steps of the Albert Hall.

Victorian literature has always carried its head high above the iconoclasts ; and although collectors of Victorian sculpture are shy birds, certain pictures of the period have found the haven of all great art—large auction prices.

Victorian fashions, with their charm and naïveté, require apologists no longer, and at last we arrive at Victorian furniture. This for long has raised murmurs of distress whenever it is mentioned, and no one comes forward to palliate its offences. Rank they are and smell to heaven ; and thus we read in the work of a well-known writer on furniture : " . . . of this period of our furniture, as of everything else in which good taste is a factor, perhaps the least said the better. It is a style, or perhaps the absence of one, which has no admirers, and of which neither

collectors nor furnishers of taste care to have representative specimens." (Litchfield, "Illustrated History of Furniture.")

But the furniture suited the people and the clothes they wore; it reflected their ideas, and as it belonged to them it also belonged to their age. The drawing-room was a suitable background for their fashions, the dinner-table supported the heavy joints and the chairs the buxom people who consumed the substantial fare. No other furniture would have suited them so well. Even "the strange, grim-looking, high-backed chair, carved in a most fantastic manner, with a flowered damask cushion and the round knobs at the bottom of the legs carefully tied up in red cloth as if it had gout in its toes," was just the sort of piece of furniture for the Victorian bedroom that Tom Smart slept in. No wonder it pleased Tom's fancy.

Probably the period of furniture about which the least has been written and upon which the smallest amount of research work has been expended is the first part of the nineteenth century. This furniture, if it is not described as Sheraton, is popularly called Early Victorian, and this generic term is adopted here. It embraces furniture which bears the imprint of many influences. The early nineteenth century was a restless period. History was in the melting pot, and the changes in furniture design were probably more extensive than during the whole of any previous century.

Under the term "Late Sheraton" or "Early Victorian" might be included English Empire, with its brass inlay, Trafalgar with its nautical carvings, Regency with its solid importance, as well as styles we more closely associate with Victorianism. Many distinguished writers on furniture have remarked that furnishing is a part of history. Nothing is more certainly the brief abstract and chronicle of its time, and a date or two will therefore not be out of place: Victoria, born 1819; Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV, Regent from 1811; George IV, King from 1820; William IV, King from 1830; Victoria, Queen from 1837.

All the styles remarked above were fashions when Victoria was born and continued into her reign. Certainly they provided the furnishings of those of our ancestors who lived beneath the tall hats or inside the poke bonnets of early Victorianism.

Victorian furniture was solid and well-made, suggestive of commercial prosperity. The workmanship was first class and

the wood of high quality, very different from the meretricious productions of the modern factory, products which happily will not outlast their generation. The Victorian sideboard with its later hideous development of bevelled mirrors, and the heavy pedestalled dining-table have yet to find champions, but there are many of the early Victorian pieces, not excepting sets of dining-room chairs, which are worth the attention of the collector, small or otherwise. Especially is this true regarding the beginning of the period.

English furniture has passed through many phases since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sheraton died in 1806, but his influence remained, as indeed it remains to-day, being, with that of Chippendale, the most powerful individualistic influence on our furniture. There had been a brief period of Empire furniture copied from the Napoleonic revival of classical forms. England, although in fear of invasion by France and its Emperor (to children the embodiment of bogey), yet paid the French the compliment of copying their furniture. Early in the century this frequently took the form of brass inlaid furniture, proved by its survivals to be of sound workmanship. An example of this type is shown in Fig. 117. Again there was the Trafalgar furniture which Jane Austen and her sailor brothers must have known. The life on the ocean wave was evident from its frankly nautical decorations of dolphins and capstans and anchors and tridents. It is curious that Napoleon and Nelson should at the same time have influenced English furniture.

When Victoria became Queen in 1837 these furniture fashions had died down. The Sheraton influence still pervaded the dining-room, where the sideboard was taking to itself turned legs and the table becoming rounder and weightier, though the chairs retained their French influence. If, however, we withdraw to the drawing-room there remain pieces of attractive and quaint charm in which collectors of the present day find interest.

Whatever may be said against the Victorian drawing-room, it was distinct and to some extent original. Our modern drawing-room is like the Congress at Spa in the "School for Scandal." The Queen Anne bureau and knee-hole writing-table, the Chippendale arm-chairs and bookcase, the Chinese porcelain, Persian rugs, William and Mary mirrors, Louis Seize commode, imperfectly camouflaged piano, bizarre wall-paper and modern settees; all these may assemble a charming picture;

Fig. 117. Chair of carved beech inlaid with brass.

Fig. 118. Quartette tables of painted wood with mother-of-pearl inlay on top.

Fig. 119. Papier mâché chairs with mother-of-pearl inlay.

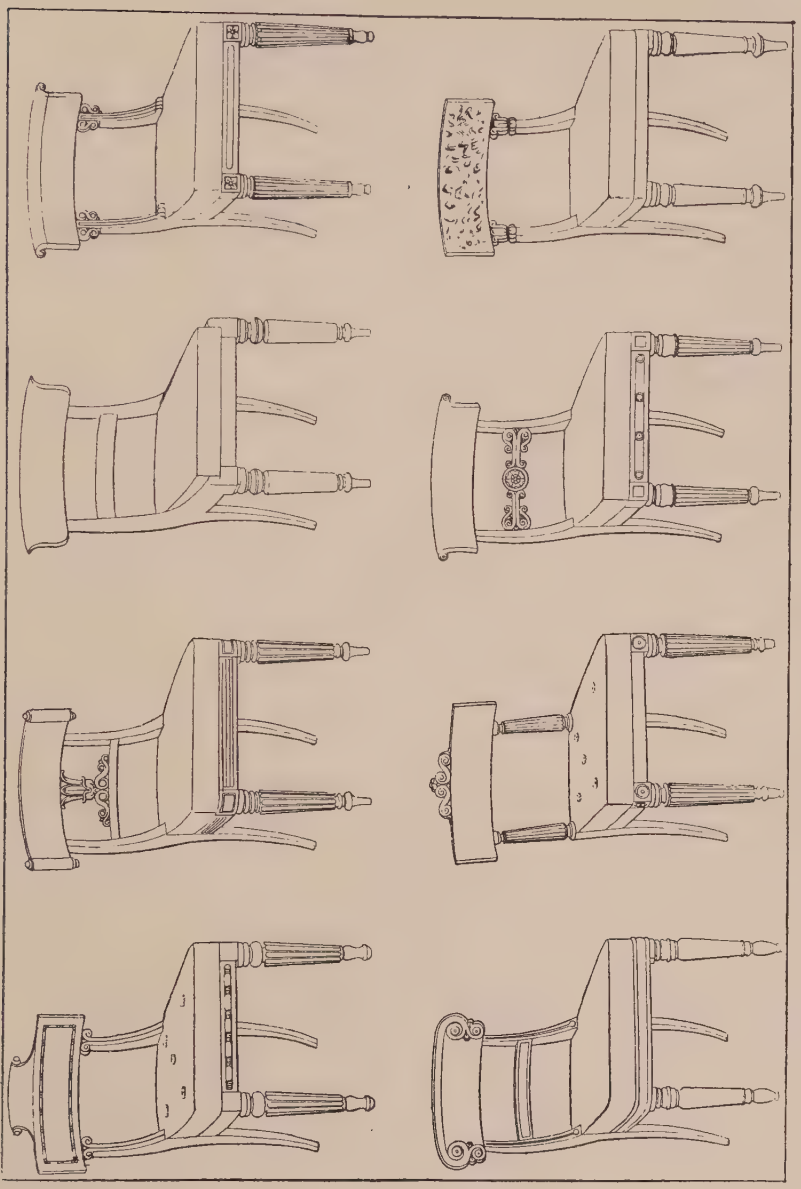

Fig. 120. Designs for parlour chairs from "The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified" (published 1829).

but there is no sense of period and the plagiarism, though charming, is plagiarism still.

Those in search of an interesting adventure in the true spirit of collecting might do worse than compose a small Victorian drawing-room. It is really overdue at that admirable repository of good taste in furniture—the Woodwork Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Such a room would be of great educational value in the museum as showing our children in what manner of surroundings their immediate ancestors lived. Twenty years ago it would have been a simple enterprise; day by day it becomes more difficult. Such a collection is, however, quite within the compass of the painstaking small collector, and a search in secondhand shops rather than among dealers in "antiques" should produce results.

It is doubtful whether an early Victorian carpet is accessible, but it is possible, and you would start from a carpet with a plain background upon which are superimposed the nosegays of small flowers. A small round table with a centre pillar support, in which the richness of the brown walnut is of fine quality, should be next sought for, but a large table should be avoided. Upon this were laid out the albums of photographs and the fashion papers. For chairs, there would be, say, one tall-backed, low seated chair covered in woolwork, for sitting by the fire; and there are the black painted wood or *papier mâché* chairs inlaid with mother-of-pearl (Fig. 119). These were made in many varying shapes, many of them of quaint attractiveness, and may still be purchased at inconsiderable prices. Small tables in the same material are also to be found, sometimes on the Chippendale plan of a nest of tables (Fig. 118).

In 1829 there was published for £1 12s., by T. King, of 18, Wilmot Street, Brunswick Square, a book of furniture designs called "The Modern Style of Cabinet Work Exemplified." It is long out of print and no doubt scarce, but it gives a very fair idea of the furniture produced in England just about a hundred years ago. Included in the illustrations are fire screens, Loo tables, occasional tables, Spanish chairs or "easy chairs with inclined seats," tea poys and many other pieces of furniture, including the "parlour chairs" shown in Fig. 120. Sets of similar chairs may be obtained from time to time at reasonable cost, and make admirable seats for any long mahogany dining tables. "Parlour chairs" of course meant dining-parlour

Fig. 121. Papier mâché tea poy.

Fig. 126. "Past and Present," by A. L. Egg, R.A. (1858).

chairs. As will be seen from the illustration, the designs are very varied. The wood, moreover, was of admirable quality and beautiful colour, and the workmanship of the best. Sets of Chippendale or Heppelwhite chairs, however derelict their state, find ready buyers at high prices. Many of these sets are literally on their last legs. There are other sets for which these famous names are mere courtesy titles. The possessor of a set of these early nineteenth century chairs, however, need never be afraid of his friends sitting on them, nor will his heart leap to his mouth at the sight of the exuberant diner taking his ease on the tilted back.

Another type of furniture for which there is a vogue is that of the inlaid pearl *papier mâché* chair referred to above. Two are shown in Fig. 119. Although the legs are without distinction, not the most virulent anti-Victorian can deny that the backs have grace and quaintness and some charm. They are decorative chairs for the modern drawing-room which is made up of many styles. They are well made, and the pearl inlay is of first-rate workmanship and of very varied patterns. They date from the forties or fifties and were made in a variety of shapes. Fig. 118 is a nest of tables in lacquered wood with mother-of-pearl inlay on top. This set of tables dates from the same period and is extremely well finished. Chippendale—or at all events the period which is named after him—first produced these nested tables, and the present example is an interesting survival in another form.

Papier mâché as a material in furniture making was popular at that time and examples are sought after by some to-day. It was prepared in moulds under hydraulic or screw pressure and is of great strength. No one, therefore, having purchased a *papier mâché* Victorian chair need hesitate to sit upon it. To the same period belongs the tea poy in painted *papier mâché* (Fig. 121), and the tray of the same material (Fig. 122). Both are boldly decorated pieces, freely painted with the favourite foliage and birds. The tray has an escalloped edge, a form generally preferred by collectors. A pair of *papier mâché* trays, decorated with birds and flowers on black ground, not, however, of high quality, were sold at Christie's in July, 1927, for 8½ guineas.

The following English *papier mâché* furniture was sold at Sotheby's in December, 1927 :—

Fig. 122. Papier mâché tray.

Fig. 123. Box stool with needlework top.

Fig. 124. One of a set of chairs with needlework seat.

Fig. 125. Chair showing French influence, with bold contemporary needlework.

A pair of chairs with oval mirror backs and elaborately inlaid borders; and two other chairs with backs inlaid and painted with bunches of flowers . . The lot, £19.

An oval table with a supposed view of Magna Charta Island, on lyre support, 2 feet 4 inches wide; and another oval table painted with fruit and other still life, 2 feet 2 inches wide . . . . The lot, £5.

It must have been true of the middle of the nineteen century that our women ancestors had much less to distract them than have their descendants of to-day. Tennis was a genteel game which a few people played in long skirts with flounces. No woman played golf or took part in politics, either municipal or national; and whatever property she had was absorbed by her husband on marriage. Nevertheless she played croquet and employed herself with needlework in wool such as is seen on the top of the box-stool shown in Fig. 123, which is an attractive piece of furniture for a bedroom. Fig. 124 shows another example of the woolwork of the period in the seat of the chair. The chair itself is light and elegant and gives a clear refutation to those who see nothing but ugliness in this period. Fig. 125 is a chair showing clearly the French influence in its build. The needlework is an admirable example of this period, a bold, finely-coloured design softened by the flight of time. It is as interesting an expression of the style of its own period as any piece of Jacobean or Queen Anne needlework can be of theirs. A chair of this type appears in one of the earliest numbers of "Punch" (July, 1841).

To work in wools has been an occupation for women from early times, and of course in law "spinster" is still the title of all unmarried women from a Viscount's daughter downward. The early nineteenth century was a popular time for the making of furniture coverings, as the large number which have survived indicate. In "Emma" the heroine says: "If I give up music I shall take to carpet work." Of course they had other occupations. "All young ladies accomplished!" says Darcy in "Pride and Prejudice." "Yes," Bingley answered, "they all paint tables, cover screens and net purses."

Fig. 127. " The Interior of the Chestnuts, Wimbledon," by Dyckman.

Fig. 128. "Children playing at Doctors," by F. H. Hardy, dated 1863, and showing furniture of previous periods.

No doubt the Victorian, like other periods, will look after itself, and the good in it will survive. No one arises to defend its ugliness, of which we have a plethora of examples to remind us. Lady Oxford and Asquith has probably found the choicest. She writes in " Lay Sermons " :—" There was a prize offered in New York some years ago for the ugliest example of Victorian art and it was awarded to a porcelain figure of the Venus of Milo with a clock in her stomach." No doubt with this warning before them collectors will be particularly discriminating in collecting examples of this period. At all events, unlike other periods, we can be in no doubt as to the appearance of Victorian interiors. Even had they not themselves survived there is the ample evidence of contemporary painters. " Past and Present," by Egg, R.A., painted in 1858 (Fig. 126), is our friend the problem picture. It shows the *papier mâché* inlaid chair, the gaselier, the debased overmantel and the rather earlier tripod table. The " Interior of the Chestnuts, Wimbledon," by Dyckman (Fig. 127), shows the rather pleasant and very comfortable middle-class house of the period; with the stuffed and carved chairs, the table with heavy twisted support, the low stool and the mirror which misses its way to pleasing you. " Children playing at Doctors," by F. H. Hardy, 1863 (Fig. 128), is interesting as showing the survival of furniture of previous periods. There is the heavy Victorian arm-chair, but there is also an Adam mirror and a charming Chippendale tripod table.

Mr. Lytton Strachey in his " Eminent Victorians " remarks : " The history of the Victorian age will never be written : we know too much about it." It may be that just as certain pictures must be viewed from a distance, so we are too close to the Victorian time to judge it fairly. Many people have only just emerged from that period, and other people both in their mentality and environment still live in it. Certainly of late years certain phases of its fashions which were judged to be either crude or ugly are now considered charming and attractive. Perhaps as time goes on what is now regarded as hideous will become bizarre, what is queer will become quaint, because fashion in taste, like life, is never still.

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